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MODERN RUSSIA

AS SEEN BY AN ENGLISHWOMAN

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FULL STOP—*A Novel*

LITTLE ARTHUR'S HISTORY OF THE  
TWENTIETH CENTURY—*A Satirical Forecast*





LENIN AT THE AGE OF FOUR

MODERN RUSSIA  
AS SEEN BY AN ENGLISHWOMAN

*By*  
CICELY HAMILTON

WITH 24 PAGES OF  
PHOTOGRAPHS

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## *FOREWORD*

A WEEK or two after my return from Russia a relation of mine was questioned by one of her acquaintance about my experiences there. The said acquaintance, to the best of my belief, had never set foot in the U.S.S.R.; but being, like other of her countrymen, an enthusiast for all its ways and works, she was curious to hear of my impressions. It so happened that one of the impressions passed on to her concerned the condition of the Russian horse—which no ordinary Englishman, I imagine, could look on without some distress; and the mention of its leanness—because it was a fact not favourable to Sovietism—put an end to the conversation. The enthusiast for the Soviet said, ‘It’s not true, it’s not true!’ as she turned on her heel and made off! I may add that, a day or two later, she called on the other party to the conversation to inform her (on what authority I know not) that bread had never been rationed in Russia of the Revolution.

I mention this incident, trivial as it is, because it typifies one of the difficulties that have to be faced by those who venture to write of the Soviet Union. Even if they themselves find it possible to treat their subject unemotionally, they must make up their minds that the public they write for is largely an emotional and therefore an unreasoning public. A public that is seldom indifferent, still more seldom judicial; being swayed to one side or the other by its prejudice or sentiment. . . .

The region comprised within the Soviet Union has certain characteristics that set it apart from all other nations of the earth. It is not only a territory and collection of peoples—it is a legend, or rather two legends: the one of Utopian achievement, the other of horror. Russia of to-day is the 'spiritual home' of thousands who have never set foot within its borders and cannot speak a word of its language. For the time being, at any rate, it has created a new religion in place of that it has cast down; a faith in the corporate body of the State, which is as intolerant of heresy, as insistent on worship being paid to its God as any religion of the past. In the days of my youth I was taught that Russia, to her children, was known as Holy Russia, and it would seem as if that power to create an atmosphere of worship were permanent; all the world over there are those who believe in the holiness of Russia as thoroughly as others believe in the holiness of God. There are circles of mankind in which the very name of Russia is a partisan label, a shibboleth; often enough by the way a man speaks it you may guess his political creed. To the adherents of one form of political thought it has seemed a bounden duty to express approval of the every act of Russian government; on the adherents of another and opposite form, condemnation has been equally binding. Other lands have the power of arousing patriotism in their own nationals; but Russia can rouse patriotism of the eager, the devoted and combative type not only in her nationals but in men of other races—men who would look on devotion to their own place and people as a folly. In England, at any rate, the motto, 'My country, right or wrong', has for many years been out of fashion; but the fact that blind loyalty for England is not

fashionable does not mean that the quality of blind loyalty is extinct. On the contrary, it is a quality persistent in the human race; and wherever it persists in sufficient strength, it will eventually discover an object of devotion—a cause demanding service and a man who embodies the cause. At the present day it happens, often enough, that the object of devotion is the Russia created by Lenin; which, considered as an outlet for faith and devotion, has this advantage over outlets nearer home—we do not live there, so its daily shortcomings are not manifest! . . . Others beside the Athenian of old have preferred to worship at the shrine of an Unknown God.

Of late, intercourse between Russia and the outside world has become more frequent. The Soviet Government, for its own good reasons, has decided to encourage that lucrative animal, the tourist; and the advent in Russia of the ordinary tourist, as distinct from the partisan and social reformer, will inevitably mean less legend and more fact in our estimate. True, the ordinary tourist is chaperoned and guided and taken in charabancs, and told only what the well-meaning Communist holds it is good for him to know; but, after all, he has eyes and ears—his senses and (with luck) his common sense! He walks about the town, he travels by train, he sees the daily life of the street; and these things, at least, he can compare with his legend, whether of Utopia or of horror! I am inclined to think that we shall get more of ‘the truth about Russia’ from persons who travel for their own amusement—just as they travel to Blackpool or Boulogne—than from earnest souls who set out with the aim of enlightenment. The tourist who travels for his own amusement will refuse—and

rightly—to devote his entire holiday to the inspection of kindergartens, maternity clinics, homes for the reclamation of prostitutes and centres for cultural improvement. Institutions of this sort, exclusively visited, will—in any country and however well run—give a lop-sided view of the life and thought of a people; which even in Russia, where the State is all-supreme, has aspects other than the cultural and institutional.

I have no claim to speak with authority on the history of Russia; but I cannot help thinking that most English writers on the Soviet Revolution have treated it too much as an isolated phenomenon, failing to recognize how much in to-day is the inevitable consequence of yesterday. It is the way of all revolutionary movements to insist on the completeness of their severance from the old regime and its abuses; and Russia of to-day is an extreme instance of the habit—the Past, to its good citizens, is a term of sheer contempt. Yet the people of Russia, like those of every other human community, are a product of their past, their race-experience; and as in every other human community their racial character, development, and destiny have been moulded by climate and geographical position. Geographically, historically and to a certain extent racially, Russia is often more akin to Asia than to Europe; hence it has inherited the Asiatic tradition of rule by the despotic hand.

There is another tradition it may be said to have inherited: acceptance of alien forms of rule. Bolshevism was not the first system of authority to be imported by those who knew their own aims and imposed them on the peoples of Russia; at least twice before, in the course of their history, the peoples of Russia have gone through

a similar experience.<sup>1</sup> The first rule imposed on them came from the East in the thirteenth century; brought by their terrible conquerors, the Tartar hordes of Genghiz Khan. Having submerged Asia from the Pacific to the Caspian, the Tartar invasion swept on into Europe; it hacked, burned, and plundered its way across Russia and beyond it, into Poland, Moravia, and Hungary; and before it was finally checked it had stirred even westernmost Europe to terror and hasty preparation. Moscow was burned to the ground by the Mongol invaders; Kiev, 'Mother of Russian Cities', was put to the sword and but little of her splendour left standing. By the middle of the thirteenth century practically the whole of what then was Russia had been subdued to the Tartar yoke; only the territory of Novgorod the Great in the north-west, protected by the thickness of surrounding forests, had been able to preserve its independence. The rulers of the various princedoms had been overthrown and their subjects, by thousands, enslaved. The wives of boyars, says an old historian, 'who had never known work and were formerly clad in rich garments and adorned with gold and jewels . . . were now reduced to servitude, had to grind corn for their masters and eat their rough food'. . . . The words might almost have been written of yesterday's fallen aristocracy.

The Tartar invasion of European Russia meant more than slain princes, lost battles and the burning of cities; it entailed interruption of what should have been the

<sup>1</sup> One might add to the list the introduction of Greek Christianity into Southern Russia by Vladimir, Prince of Kiev—whose wholesale and forcible conversion of his subjects earned him the dignity of Saint.

normal political development of a people. Of the steppes of the south the invader took permanent possession; they supplied his herds with pasturage and himself with space for nomad horsemanship. The Tartar dominion of the Golden Horde extended across the whole of southern Russia, from the frontiers of Asia to the mouth of the Danube—thus threatening the territories of the princes of the more northern region, whom it held in subjection and vassalage. Those of the princes who retained their lands retained them not as independent rulers but as feudatories of an Asiatic overlord, to whom they owed tribute and submission. For two hundred years and more—from the thirteenth century to the latter half of the fifteenth—the lordship of the Tartar Khans endured, with lasting effect upon the destiny of European Russia. Because they were subject to Asiatic suzerainty, the orientation of her people was definitely away from their fellow-Christians of the European continent; the cleavage that Rome and Byzantium had begun was made wider yet by the Mongol. Thus even when the day of Eastern lordship was over, and the princes of Moscow, lifting up their heads, no longer paid tribute to the Golden Horde—even then Russia remained with her face to the East. The outlook and manners of the nations of Europe, the systems of government towards which those nations were feeling their way—all these meant nothing to the subjects of the Muscovite Tsars. . . . By the way, before leaving the Tartar and his lordship, it is worthy of note that the Mongol rulers of Russia, like the Bolshevik, were fired by the idea of internationalism—a world-state where all should live in amity. ‘When once all peoples have saluted me as sovereign, then an age of happy tranquillity

will begin throughout the world.' Such was the ideal and ambition of a Grand Khan of the thirteenth century; the above quotation being from a letter dispatched to no less a personage than St. Louis of France—wherein St. Louis was urged to recognize the Khan's supremacy, and so help to bring about the era when the lion would lie down with the lamb.

The second system of alien rule was an import from Europe, not from Asia: the system introduced and imposed by Peter the Great; the crowned revolutionary who flung his barbarian energy into progress, as his age understood it; and who was as thoroughgoing an enemy of his country's past as any disciple of Lenin! *Sa lutte acharnée contre les forces du passé*—so a French historian characterizes the process whereby Peter, through sheer force of ruthless will, turned the face of his Russia from East to West, dragged her across centuries towards civilized Europe and transformed her every institution. 'The Russian temper does not stop half-way; it avoids compromise and dislikes the method of harmonizing old and obsolete with newly acquired ideals as, for example, is the habit of the Anglo-Saxon mind.' The words are those of a student of New Russia; but they are not only true of the modern revolutionist—they are equally true of Peter. He tolerated no half-measures—his motto was 'Thorough!'; and in his policy of change the revolutionary Tsar was as fanatically eager as any modern Communist—as eager and likewise as pitiless. Against such as ventured to oppose his will *il déploya l'énergie de son caractère . . . et l'appareil terrible d'un pouvoir absolu ; il traîna de vive force la nation dans la voie de progrès. . . .* Dragged the nation by main force along the road to progress—that again might be written of those who came

to power yesterday. Crowned or uncrowned, the Russian revolutionary does not shrink from blood, and Peter, like the Reds, had his 'Terror'. There was the day when the great Square of Moscow grew a forest of gallows for the hanging of two hundred rebels brought thither in carts, burning candles in their hands, while their wives and children ran lamenting after the carts. Even post-war ruthlessness cannot do much better than that!

What Peter worked for was a State on the European model, especially on that of contemporary France; a State, like France, autocratically ruled but civilized in manner and in culture. With an administration, a diplomatic service, an army and a navy on the Western pattern; with new laws, new trades, new means and ends of education. The men who made history in 1917 were not more in a hurry with their revolution than was Peter Romanov with his; and being, like the Communist, industrially minded, he also brought in the foreigner, the expert, to give instruction in new manufacturing processes, and encourage the development of Russia's neglected mines. There was a good deal of Socialism about his views; he held that every citizen, from prince to prince's serf, owed duty to the State and was bound to render it service. And another close likeness between himself and the rulers of the Soviet Union: the education he fostered was of the practical, material, utilitarian type. It was the science and technical skill of the West that he desired his subjects to acquire and imitate; hence he founded schools that turned out engineers, navigators, and accountants, not colleges for the study of the classics. He had a veritable army of translators, working on the literature of the West; but the books which they russianized at his word of command dealt, for the most

part, with the practical, administrative knowledge that would further his reforms. Innumerable works on agriculture, navigation, jurisprudence and such-like subjects were translated for his subjects' benefit. . . . He was modern, too, in his conception of an all-embracing State; he would have agreed with Fascism that there is 'nothing outside the State', that, 'in every field of collective life it has its own mission to fulfil'. The church, the law, the army; trade, commerce, finance; private life, social intercourse, costume and manner—one and all came under the hand of the revolutionary Tsar, as they have come in our day under the hand of a revolutionary dictatorship. Because he envisaged an all-embracing State, he had no mind that a spiritual authority should clash with an autocratic temporal; and his 'modernization' of the Orthodox Church, by the institution of the Holy Synod, was a factor in its loss of influence and decline into subservient materialism.

Yet another link between Peter, called the Great, and the latter-day rulers of his empire: he also stood for improvement in the status of women—which, when he seized the reins of power, was sorely in need of improvement. In nothing was the Russian more thoroughly Asiatic than in his treatment and estimate of women. The wife was a chattel, subject in all things to the will of her husband and governor; in the lower classes a beast of burden, to be driven with a stick, if her man so pleased; in the higher, to all intents and purposes a prisoner—living veiled and secluded in the *terem*, the women's quarter of the house. . . . Many have written of the sufferings of proletarians and humble peasants, ground beneath the heel of wealth and aristocracy; but

there have been regions of the earth (of which Old Russia was surely one) where it was often better for a woman-child to be born in a hovel than the daughter of blue-blooded parents. Poverty, for women, had this advantage over wealth; the poor man could not afford to build a prison for his wife and daughters, convey them through the streets in a litter hung with curtains, and hire domestics to keep them from contact with the outside world. So, from sheer lack of pence some measure of freedom was granted them; a freedom denied to the women of the high-born wealthy. In Old Russia, at any rate, one of the saddest of all destinies was to be born in the purple, a daughter of the Tsar; the unfortunate *Tsarevna*, as a general rule, was not only a lifelong prisoner in the *terem*, but could not even hope for a change of prison by marriage.

The motive by which Peter was actuated in his policy of weakening the family tie was fundamentally that of the Soviet revolutionist who is carrying on his tradition; to one and the other the family, as he found it, was incompatible with the State he desired to establish. So long as the Russian family was an Asiatic institution, how were institutions imported from the West to establish themselves on Russian soil? and while the wives of his aristocracy were close prisoners in the *terem*, how was Peter's court of St. Petersburg to emulate the glories of Versailles? Hence he set to work to westernize the family and modernize women with the same energy he put into his modernization of soldiers, diplomats and clergy; to the horror, even, of many of its prisoners, he flung open the doors of the *terem*—and as he had shorn off the masculine beard, so he pulled off the feminine veil. He showed himself a champion of the

rights of the younger generation by his radical alterations in certain of the marriage laws and customs of his day, alterations designed to ensure greater freedom of personal choice and thereby uphold the younger generation against the tyranny of parental authority. Henceforth brides and bridegrooms were no longer to be disposed of in chattel fashion—married off by their fathers to partners they had never set eyes on. Before the wedding took place, they were to meet and make each other's acquaintance; and if the result of the meeting were not satisfactory, they had the right to break the engagement made on their behalf. . . . As to the changes in social life and habits introduced by Peter, these, in their day, to the conservatives of Russia, must have seemed as revolutionary as any of the changes brought about by the followers of Lenin. With the abolition of seclusion for women came other novelties in manners that must have staggered the older generation; the meeting in drawing-rooms and ballrooms of the two sexes that custom had hitherto kept rigidly apart; the talking and dancing together of men and women who were acquiring, by order of their master, the arts of society as practised in the courts of the West. It is true that these revolutionary changes affected in the first place only a limited class; but it was a class influential as well as conservative, a class whose example would be followed. It is not the least of Peter's many achievements that he took the Russian woman, bred in Eastern tradition, and, whether she would or whether she would not, set her feet upon the road to Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Like the authority the Mongols had brought from the

<sup>1</sup> See note A at end of volume.

East, the system of government that Peter Romanov had learned from the West endured for a couple of centuries. It was in the early seventeen-hundreds that the terrible genius drove through his reforms—with the aid of the gallows, the razor, the school, and the drill-sergeant: it was in the early nineteen-hundreds that the next revolution swept his imperial edifice away—and another reformer, as ruthless as himself, ‘*traînâ de vive force la nation dans la voie de progrès*’. When Peter’s system broke, it broke completely, into ruin; and it may be that its utter and disastrous overthrow was due to the fact that it was in essence alien; a system imported, not of native growth, having no real root in the soil. Proof of that is the Slavophil cult of the nineteenth century; the widespread discontent of the intelligentsia with existing conditions, political and social, encouraging an idealistic view of the past. The Slavophils dreamt of a Russia relying on her own genius and casting off the shackles that Peter had brought from the West. The same reproach, of alien origin, may be brought in the future against Communism—Marxism—Leninism—State Capitalism—whatever is the correct description of the present system of government, since the gospel of Marx was first preached in the German tongue. But whereas Peter adapted to the uses of his empire a system he had seen and admired in the working, what Lenin and his fellows imported was a theory of government—a system untried, experimental.

This Russian experiment (as we have learned to call it) is being tried out on a stupendous scale; between the eastern and western boundaries of the territory controlled by the U.S.S.R.—between the Baltic Sea and the coast of the North Pacific—there lies from one-

STATUE OF PETER THE GREAT, LENINGRAD





sixth to one-seventh of the land surface of the globe. The present generation is dazzled by the idea of immensity—of huge agglomerations of people, money, trade, manufactures, nations; otherwise it would probably be common knowledge that one of the most formidable handicaps of the Russian experiment is this very immensity of scale. Do not common sense and science alike suggest that experiment, in whatever medium attempted, should first have its day of small things? All new undertakings are bound to have their checks, all men inexperienced are bound to make their blunders—which, so they be made on a small enough scale, need entail no serious consequence and can be remedied without undue loss. Take, for instance, the case of the collective farm—where Stalin himself has admitted the failure of expectation and the need for more rigorous measures.<sup>1</sup> If the mistakes which are bound to result during trial of new methods of farming and from the blunders of a new bureaucracy—if these mistakes were confined to an area and population comparatively small, then the resulting food shortage could be dealt with and remedied by contributions laid on other districts. Such a limited food shortage might mean hardship, but it would not mean widespread famine and the death of thousands. . . . A pity the Marxian experiment was not first tried out in a country the size of the Irish Free State—or better still, in Andorra!

As it is: Russian Communism is the largest political experiment ever ventured on by human enthusiasm; put to the test over the half of two continents, on a hundred and sixty odd millions of men. Even that vast scale of experiment, however, was too small for the faith and

<sup>1</sup> See speech of 11th Jan. 1933.

ambition of Lenin and his fellow-workers; when they swept out Tsarism, and flung Kerensky after it, they had no thought of halting their red banner at the frontier of the Tsar's dominions. Their ambition was wider, far wider than that; what they hoped and believed in was a revolution that would flare irresistibly from one frontier to another. An international revolution of the proletariat that would permit them to experiment with more than two continents—a world.

So it was not to be: irresistible on Russian territory, the Revolution was stayed at its frontiers. Finland thrust it back and the new Baltic states were a barrier; and when the way to western Europe seemed all but open, then the army of Poland interposed with a definite No! But for its double overthrow, first at the Vistula and then at the Niemen, the Red Army of Russia would have found its road open into Germany—a Germany still torn by post-war faction—and Lenin might have tried his great experiment on the industrial nations of Europe. . . . Even among those who look for eventual salvation from the doctrines of Marx, there must be many who think it was just as well that the faith inspired by these doctrines in Lenin and his Bolsheviks did not sweep round the world in one impetuous and overwhelming flood.

Of the difficulty of other peoples' prejudices I have spoken already; there is, in addition, the difficulty of one's own. In a sense these latter are the easier to contend with, for the simple reason that they are one's own and therefore more under control than the prejudices of others. On the other hand they are always in the background and liable to intrude at inconvenient moments; all one can do is to admit and sum them up

with honesty. . . . Here, then, are mine, so far as I am conscious of them.

To begin with the Russian attitude towards the State, the community! . . . If you are individualist by temperament and training: if you hold it as a cardinal article of your faith that Man, in the mass—as organization, mob, party, or State—is an entity whose standard of morals and intelligence is lower than that of the decent individual; if this is your conviction, you find it impossible to give honest adherence to that creed of State-worship which the Soviet Union shares with other parts of Europe. More: holding the views that you do on mass intelligence and mass morality, it follows, as the night the day, that you will esteem it the duty of the decent individual—however loyal and convinced of the necessity for order—to keep his conscience free of absolute subjection to any community, whatever its nature, and even though it call itself supreme. To one so minded the Soviet idealization of Collective Man is based on nothing more substantial than illusion; the Soviet demand for the unquestioning submission of the individual conscience to the ruling of the organization means the submission of the higher to the lower and takes on therefore the aspect not of progress but of backsliding.

And if you believe, further, that the essential of your being is not in the body that perisheth; if your thought of the Highest cannot be embodied in man but strives beyond him towards God; there again the Russian ideal of Collective Man, the Russian insistence on the finite life, must fail of inspiration and meaning.

These disqualifications, in justice to my subject, I have here set down in black and white; and have tried, in the

pages that follow, to keep them continually before me. In justice to myself, as well as to my subject, I should add that my prejudices are not all on one side: there are certain aspects of the life of New Russia—in particular, the right to voluntary motherhood—with which I believe I am in greater sympathy than many who would look upon my views as hopelessly reactionary.

• • • • •

A last word of preface—which I write with some reluctance but feel to be necessary. I have it from those on whose word I can rely—who in some cases speak from the experience of years—that an author who publishes any fact or detail which sheds an unfavourable light on the present system, or those who administer it, is likely to bring misfortune on any Russian citizen who is thought to have supplied the data for unfavourable conclusion. That warning has influenced me in my treatment of certain incidents, whose record might be unacceptable to the Soviet powers that be; in more than one instance I have confined myself to mere statement when I should have preferred to cite authority. It has meant, also, that once or twice, in describing an incident, I have been purposely inaccurate as to detail, lest identification ensue. These inaccuracies are in no case material to my argument; but trifling as they are and infrequent as they are, in a book of this nature they should, I think, be admitted. Even though—given the circumstances—I do not feel they call for apology.

C. H.

1934.

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## *I. THE DRAB AND THE RED*

IT is a law of nature and the universe that Beginning shall not be beautiful; in man as in beast, in plant and undertaking, the first stage of existence is unpleasing. The chubby infant and the opening rose do not belie this statement, they support it, since both are long past their beginnings; in the case of the infant, beginning was the foetus, in the case of the rosebud, the seed. The same rule applies to the creations of mankind. The foundations of a palace are laid unaesthetically, with litter and scratchings in the ground; and at its birth the community (like the individuals of which it is composed) is often a squalid-looking creature. We have no right, therefore, to expect that Soviet Russia, new come into existence, should escape the common fate and walk in beauty from its earliest years.

New Russia, not a doubt of it, is ugly—grey and squalid—and what beauty there is to perceive in the daily surroundings of its streets is usually a heritage from the past that New Russia despises; but if it were not ugly as it struggled into life, it would be a miraculous creation. As regards the clothing of the population, the aim would appear to be industrial Europe at its shoddiest; the mass-produced cloth cap—the thing with a peak—that you see by the thousand in a British football crowd, you also see by the thousand on the heads of the Russian proletariat. About all modern garments there is a drabness, a sameness—the women's are as drab, or almost

as drab, as the men's. When your eye is caught by something different from the common run, then you may be sure that it is not modern, it is old use and fashion handed down; like the embroidered linen blouse, with its dash of welcome colour, or the high Tartar cap in the south. In justice to the mass-producing clothiers of the present day, it is only fair to mention that, judging by travellers' reminiscences and records, the Russian tendency has always been towards monotony in wearing apparel. Recently, on the shelf of a second-hand bookseller, I came across a minor treasure in the shape of a Murray's handbook to Russia, published in the year 1839—and whose author makes special and lengthy remark on the lack of variety in clothing. 'Strange as the aspect of a whole population in sheepskins and long beards must be to the traveller, he very soon becomes familiar with it; especially when almost every man is dressed precisely alike, or rather, I should say, where there are two, and only two, classes. The one, and by far the most numerous, in sheepskins, and the other, comprising the shopkeepers and coachmen, wearing a long blue dress belted round the waist and reaching in ample folds to the ground. Beyond these two subdivisions, the Russian capitals (excepting of course for the military) present no variety in the way of dress among the natives; all alike wear loose boots, into which their ample trousers are tucked; and the low-crowned hat, with its broad band and many buckles, is alike universal. In Moscow we expected to see this dull monotony broken by an admixture of the gay and gaudy colours of the East—to see the Persian in his embroidered silks and shawls, and the Turk and the Tartar in all the splendour of their national costumes.

But in this we were sadly disappointed; all was as uniform and dull as at St. Petersburg—the eternal sheepskins and blue wrappers met us at every turning; and though Jew and Turk and Persian might be recognized by their strongly marked features, there was no perceptible difference in dress. The Tartars alone can be said to have a costume of their own; but their variegated leather boots are so covered with their thick slippers and long loose dresses that one hardly distinguishes them. . . . There is no trace here of the gay and gorgeous colours of the East, save in the buildings—the golden domes of the Kremlin and the fantastic minarets of St. Basil. . . .

If Moscow and St. Petersburg, a century ago, seemed monotonously clad to a visitor from England, they must all the same have been brightened by flashes of colour and glitter of ornament unknown to the streets of modern Moscow and Leningrad. In the dresses of their soldiery, for instance; the compiler of *Murray* more than once lays stress on ‘the numerous military uniforms with which the streets of the Russian capital may be said to swarm’. And in Russia, as elsewhere, a hundred years ago, military uniform was varied and flamboyant; intended to be seen by both enemy and friend, not designed with the object of making its wearer invisible. Then a century ago every Russian was—nominally at least—a Christian; the feasts of the Orthodox Church were generally observed; and their ceremonious ritual must have given a touch of pageantry to life.

Uniform, no doubt, had sobered down considerably between the epoch of Nicholas, first of the name, and the epoch of Nicholas the Second; but in pre-revolutionary Moscow and St. Petersburg there must have

been shopping quarters, as in other capitals—shopping quarters with gay windows, which cannot be found there to-day. And the women of those days could not always have been clad in drab colours? Those who could afford the bright and individual must surely have been moved to wear it now and then? . . . As, if the bright and individual were but purchasable, they would certainly wear it to-day!

For make no mistake about it! If all Russian men are content with the drabness wherewith they go clad, all Russian women are not! Perhaps ornament and brightness will come back to daily life as a direct consequence of the revolt of Russian women against their drab surroundings; not an organized revolt but the instinctive struggle of countless individuals towards the desirable, the colourful, which in the end will get the better of the dreariness prevalent to-day. . . . See a girl's eyes glisten at sight of a gay silk handkerchief—the kind of trifle that in London can be bought for a shilling or two and in Russia is a treasure and a rarity! See that and you realize that here is something that goes deeper than education, that may even defy education. It is not a matter of throwback to old associations; this desire for the colourful is present in young people, quite young people, who can have no memory of any but drab clothes and surroundings.

In a recent study of modern Russia, written by a German,<sup>1</sup> I came across the following statement: 'Nowhere is so little interest shown in other peoples' clothes as in the Soviet Union'. I can only say my experience is not that of the author. Perhaps there is not much interest in the general uniformity—after all, why should

<sup>1</sup> *Youth in Soviet Russia*, by Klaus Mehnert.

there be? One khaki-clad soldier or black-coated waiter does not turn round to stare at another in any region of the world! But when it comes to foreign clothes, clothes that are different, then the Russian, like the rest of us, sits up and takes notice. Such also, I gather has been the experience of an author from whom I shall quote elsewhere in this volume, and who speaks, in this connection of 'the youngster, male or female', who 'eyes the foreigner from the West carefully and copies him as nearly as he can'.<sup>1</sup>

I remember well my first encounter with this joy in the colourful and interest in the foreigner's clothing. It took place in a train; my companions on the usual interminable journey being three girls, three friendly young women who were travelling together. With them I carried on such intercourse as could be carried on by the aid of a few words of German possessed by one of the three and a few words of Russian possessed by myself—a limited vocabulary which we eked out by signs and good will. At one of the stations they procured me hot water for the making of my tea and partook, in return, from a tin of my English biscuits. But it was not my biscuits that roused them to enthusiasm—that came with a sight of my bathing-cap, my very ordinary bathing-cap, such as can be bought in any shop, in any street, helmet-shaped and fashioned of bright blue rubber—common object of the shore and the swimming-bath. It so happened that, in packing, I had placed this common object on the top of one of my suit-cases; and half-way through the journey I opened the suit-case in order to get out a book. On the instant, exclamations from the other three corners of the carriage;

<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Thompson in *The New Russia*.

all my companions, pleasurabley alert, were gazing at my humble property. When I realized it was the bathing-cap that had stirred them to interest, I handed it out for their inspection and they one and all fingered it admiringly. How pretty it was—they had never seen anything like it! ‘*Schön, schön, schön!*’ said the little girl who spoke German. Obviously it was the colour that made the appeal; they had exclaimed at sight of the bright blue rubber before they knew what it was: and I noted that such other of my possessions as roused their interest were all of them bright of hue. There was an embroidered bag in which I kept my knitting; had I brought that from England? they asked me—and were interested to know it had come in the first place from India. And the bag, also, was passed round the carriage for nearer inspection by the company.

Two American tourists whom I met on my travels told me that the opening of their baggage in the train had created similar excitement; in fact I gathered they had held a reception *en route*—a species of fashion parade, attended by the female occupants of neighbouring compartments. They were both of them good-looking women and wore good-looking clothes, so I can well imagine the sensation the parade created. They described its procedure with considerable amusement; how they took out one dress after another and held it up at its full length and width, while their fellow-travellers made careful pencil sketches—with a view to reproducing the creations on their own account. Patterns of un-Russian garments are obviously in request; I was told by a man who had made frequent visits to the country that English newspapers and magazines are coveted because of their fashions. If you leave one lying about in a hotel, the

chances are that, when you recover it, you may find it lacking in its illustrated dress advertisements. The bargains obtainable at a sale in Kensington High Street; the model blouses at twelve-and-nine, the three-piece suits at fifty-two and six—their counterfeit presentments will have been cut out, in the hope of future imitation. Dress material unfortunately is one of the numerous amenities of life of which there is at present a shortage in the Soviet Union; it is to be feared, therefore, that some, at least, among these would-be modistes do not get beyond the stage of abstracting patterns from newspapers. This shortage of material is not confined to ornamental fabrics; what we should consider absolute necessities of clothing are not always to be bought for money. Boots, for instance; and I was told of a professional man, in a good position, who, when his winter overcoat began to wear out, put money aside for a new one. That, said my informant, was three years ago and the sum laid aside was still unspent—for the simple reason that no overcoat had yet been obtainable.

It is not women alone, I may mention, who manifest a lively interest in the wear and equipment of the foreigner; the Russian man also will inspect and ask his curious questions. I usually began the lengthy journeys which are one of the trials of travel in Russia by divesting myself of my heavy walking-shoes and getting into comfortable slippers. On one occasion a Red Army officer, who was travelling in my carriage, was present during the settling-down process; and as I took off the walking-shoes he promptly pounced and scrutinized them—scrutinized them, sole, heel, and uppers! As I am something of a walker, my habit is to buy strong shoes, and these were a pair of good handsewn English leather,

fastened with a buckle and a strap. The officer, I gathered, had never seen their like; he took them to the window, the better to see; he weighed them admiringly, he felt the leather, he held them, for purpose of comparison, against his own military boots. So great was his astonishment or admiration that it had to be shared with others; he called in his wife from the corridor, to let her feel and weigh; he called in a friend to do likewise; and finally removed the unusual foot-gear, to exhibit it in other compartments. . . . While I am on the subject of footgear: the shoes of the female citizen of the U.S.S.R. are not (as one might have expected) of particularly 'sensible' pattern; the women's shoes of Communism, like those of Capitalism, are mass-produced with high heels.

As their word for red also signifies beautiful, we may conclude that even in the days of tsarist tyranny red was a favourite hue with the Russian people. It is to be hoped, for their own sake, this preference still continues; for in the matter of decoration and ornament, they seem to get very little else. (A fact, perhaps, which accounts for the pleasure of my young fellow-travellers in blue!) It was in the latter half of May that I arrived in Moscow, and the ceremonial pageant of the First of May was something like three weeks past; but the City Fathers—or whoever was responsible—had evidently been in no great hurry to clear away the debris of rejoicing. To a great extent the paraphernalia of scaffolding and ornament was still in place, and all that I saw was coloured revolutionary red. And the paint and dye that goes to the making of revolutionary red I did not as a rule find attractive; it does not weather well and, save by exception, it is lacking in gaiety and richness. As

SAILORS ON THE WAY TO HELP WITH THE HARVEST





paint it is usually brownish in hue, unpleasantly brownish; very often, in fact, it is more than reminiscent of dried blood.

The new-style wedding, I have been given to understand, is not usually deemed worthy of decoration; the union is registered in businesslike fashion, without the aid of bridesmaids or veils. But it is different with funerals; there ornament and ceremony is still permitted and I have seen the passing of more than one red funeral. The first I saw I remember very clearly—I suppose because it was the first; an unpretentious funeral, the coffin on an open lorry. With it were three men, the mourners, and a pot with a growing hydrangea. The coffin was covered with a pall of red cotton material, and the same red material hung in loops round the sides of the lorry. The most ceremonious funeral I saw in Russia was evidently that of a sailor, since a couple of dozen sailors in uniform headed the procession which must have run to more than two hundred. Communism, apparently, has not yet evolved its own funeral music, and the dead sailor's comrades and mourners marched to the familiar strains of Chopin. What was unfamiliar about this funeral pageant was a small-size imitation coffin carried at the head of the procession. Perhaps the body had already been cremated; or perhaps the distance to be traversed was so long that it was thought necessary to transport the actual coffin by vehicle, and substitute a symbol for the march. Whatever the reason, the actual coffin was not borne in the procession; in its place, on the shoulders of the leading sailors, was carried a box in the orthodox shape but too narrow to contain a skeleton, much less a body. What this symbol of death was made of I know not—

probably of some light wood—because its outer surface was upholstered in red cloth; while the wreaths carried by the mourners were adorned with the inevitable red ribbon.

On the Russian sailor, by the by—and I saw a good many of him in the region of Sebastopol—I always looked with pleasure; he was the one person whose appearance lent a touch of brightness to the streets. His garments, of ordinary sailor type, in themselves were a pleasurable contrast to everybody else's dinginess; you saw him coming in the distance, as you did not see his fellow of the army—whose uniform, like that of every other modern army, fades into the landscape and the crowd. Also there was a neatness and smartness about him—characteristics sufficiently rare in the Soviet Union: he may not be disciplined, but he looks it. And in all probability disciplined he is, though the discipline may take a different form from that which obtained in the navy of the old regime. Because you call your officer 'Comrade', instead of 'Sir', it does not follow you are in a position to ignore the orders that he gives you; and however eloquently committees may discuss, however frequently they meet and vote, the sea has a way of insisting on unity of command.

So far as I remember, throughout my travels I only once saw a woman in a really bright dress. This was worn at a concert and was obviously a 'party frock', though not of the low-necked variety; in colour it was pink, a very strong pink, in some silky material. If not imported as a finished product, it must have been carefully copied from a foreign model. In an audience prevailingly monotonous, the effect of its ferocious pink was striking; and for my part I found it pleasurable,

a relief from the accustomed dinginess. Its wearer also appeared to be pleased with it and to have no objection to the attention it attracted when she paraded the corridors in the intervals. A good many members of the audience, I imagine, would have liked to go as gaily clad!

## *II. THE CHILD—REAL AND LEGENDARY*

ON the ending of the Great War there followed what the historian of the future will possibly describe as the Epoch of the Child; among all the races that we call civilized there was a sudden rush of interest in the welfare of the younger generation; and for some reason which I leave it to the psychologist to explain, this interest in child welfare was everywhere accompanied by a belief in the original virtue of humanity. . . . A strange belief to emerge from four years of hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, not to mention organized murder! But emerge it did.

This belief in original virtue implied another; that the many and glaring errors of the past were due only to training and tradition. Youth, unhampered by the old faulty training and tradition, and encouraged to go its own virtuous way, would remould the world that the folly of its elders had broken. Hence post-war enthusiasm not only for education but for Youth Movements; which (until they began to wave flags and shake their fists) were to lead us by the paths of peace.

New Russia, fresh from the overthrow of tsardom, had an even greater scorn than the rest of the world for all that belonged to the past, and therefore an even greater faith than the rest of the world in the perfectibility of the younger generation. So at least one must conclude from the accounts given by credible witnesses of the manner in which the young of New

Russia are accustomed to instruct their elders and take them to task for their errors. The youthful pioneer, for instance, who reproves the dilatory factory hand when his work is not up to the mark! . . . What, I wonder, would be the fate of such a conscientious child if it started its speeding-up course of instruction in British surroundings? say, on members of the Miners' Federation or the Boilermakers' Union?

From the *Moscow Daily News*—a little sheet published in the English language, giving rosy accounts of Soviet progress—I have culled the following item, as an illustration of the habit of youthful supervision. It appeared in an issue of June 1933, at a time when the public of the Soviet Union was being urged to contribute its uttermost sparing to the Second Five Year Loan. Its author describes himself as an American machine-worker, and the title he gives to his literary effort is 'Vanya Yura Gets Peeved'. It runs as follows:

'Hey there! Hello!'

I turned around. Sure enough, it was little Vanya Yura Anikeyevi, student of the second class. I used to meet him often while leaving the factory, and I liked him. When he grew up he was also going to work at the Kalinin factory like his pop. And he was going to be an engineer. A good one, too.

'How are you, Vanya? How are things at school?'

'Pretty good. And how's work in the factory?'

'Well, Vanya,' I said, 'we're still putting out tools.'

'That doesn't mean anything,' said Vanya critically.

Are you fulfilling the industrial-financial plan?'

'Yes!'

'All right, then!' Vanya appeared satisfied. But only

for a moment. ‘And what about the new loan of the Second Pyatiletka? (Five Year Plan.) Have you signed up for that?’

‘Sure,’ I said.

‘How much?’ asked Vanya unabashed.

‘For two hundred roubles,’ I answered uncertainly. I was beginning to feel a bit nervous. Perhaps I should have signed up for more.

‘And how much do you make?’ continued Vanya.

‘About a hundred and fifty a month,’ I answered, a slight tremor in my voice.

Vanya thought a bit. I awaited his verdict a bit uneasily.

‘Well, all right! Good enough!’ he concluded, and I drew a sigh of relief.

‘When you grow up to be a man, and go to work in a factory,’ I said, ‘you’ll also sign up for the loans.’

Vanya drew himself up to his full height.

‘What do you mean—“When I grow up!”’ Do you think I’m a baby? I’ve already signed up for the new loan.’

He gave me a few minutes to recover from my astonishment.

‘Sure! Me and my brother Ivan, we saved up fifteen roubles and signed up for the loan. Do you think only the workers are helping to build socialism in our country? Huh!’

Vanya was certainly peeved, there was no doubt about it.

‘We students are also doing our share. And do you know what else Ivan and I did? We wrote a socialist competition challenge to the other students to sign up for the loan too. A lot of them have signed up already.

'Huh,' said Vanya, 'you must think we're kids!' And with that Vanya Yura Anikeyevi stuck his hands in his pockets and walked off. . . .

So runs this moral anecdote, inculcating Soviet patriotism! The fact that Vanya (who in English is Johnny) has a brother Ivan (who in English is John) makes me somewhat doubtful of his existence as an actual personality. But whether he is Vanya, a schoolboy in the flesh, or merely a fiction, created by the American machine-worker, it is clear that he is held up for our admiration, as an example to his fellows and a worthy specimen of Young Russia. If he is old enough, he belongs to the Pioneers, if too young for Pioneer membership, to the junior body, the Octobrists; and whichever he belongs to he considers it his duty to keep his elders up to the scratch and pounce on the worker, of whatever trade, who shows any symptoms of ca' canny.

I myself have never come across any of these juveniles when engaged in their speeding-up, tutorial activities; but I have heard an Englishwoman of communist sympathies describe, among her happy experiences in Russia, the visit to a factory of a group of earnest Pioneers. One object of the visit—or rather visitation—was to shame the workers addicted to drink and increase the local output by reducing consumption of vodka. I have my full share of our English dislike of the juvenile prig, and the Pioneer sitting in judgment on his elders, rebuking the slacker and shaming the drunkard, inevitably suggests the prig. But there is this to be said in his justification and in justification of those who encourage him: a system that is striving to cut itself off from the past, striving to destroy in its people the

rooted tradition of centuries—that system inevitably must turn to the young and work through them. Among their elders it is only the thoroughly convinced and the fanatics who can be relied on absolutely to break with their memories and the habits they were bred in; all those who have not in them the fire of fanaticism will be hampered by memory and by habit—hampered, in fact, by that very experience which, in other social systems, is an asset. The young, on the contrary—so the new system does but catch them young enough—have no memories to live down and no habits to unlearn; they are born to the new order and accept it without question. And that being the case, they are likely enough to outstrip their elders both in theory and practice of their creed. . . . The claim of an elder generation to authority over a younger is based fundamentally on its experience of life; but in Soviet Russia, contemptuous of the past, it is exactly that elder experience of life which the present system desires to sweep out of being. Inevitably, then, the positions of the two generations are to a certain extent reversed; it is the child, informed with communist mentality, who can—and does—Instruct its lagging parent in communist manners and morals. In the matter of atheism, for instance, youth will usually be ahead of maturity. Parents who were bred up in the Christian faith will still cling to it, spite of official disapproval, when their youngsters come trotting home from school to make fun of the ikons hanging on the walls and advise the unregenerate father and mother that religion is a fable, found useful by the bourgeoisie for keeping the workers in submission. In a recent book on Russian conditions—*Red Virtue*, by Ella Winter—I came across a story of





A KINDERGARTEN IN A 'COLLECTIVE' VILLAGE

a three-year-old who was employed by her teacher as a vehicle for anti-religious instruction in the home. The child 'came to school with a cross on a chain round her neck. The teacher told her she should not wear it. The mother was very angry. "My child shall always wear this cross," she cried. A few months later the child came to the kindergarten without it. "You see, the mother had learned," said the teacher. . . . It would be interesting to know whether the conversion of the mother was due to the fact that she had absorbed the doctrines of atheism from infant lips; or whether her small daughter, being laughed at at school by more enlightened babes, had on that account obtained permission to remove the obnoxious cross.

Obviously this reversal of the ordinary position—this instruction of the elder generation by the younger—can only be temporary; it will come to an end within measurable time, with the passing of those who were born into Russia of the old regime and retained its mentality and outlook. The infants of to-day who instruct their parents in the use of machinery and the tenets of atheism and communism will require no such teaching from their own boys and girls; they will have been bred in the atheistic, communistic faith and themselves will pass it on to the next generation. Once again, therefore, if Bolshevism endures, the elder will have the advantage—the natural advantage—of experience: the Russian adult of to-morrow will no longer need to struggle with the influence of a Past which to him is no more than a legend. The Past he remembers will be that of the glorious proletarian Revolution, untroubled by the errors of a bourgeoisie.

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In Moscow, in one of the communal tenement houses, I was taken to the kindergarten attached to the building; there the mothers who went out to factories, etc., left their children to be cared for during working hours. No doubt about it, they were cared for happily—a set of jolly, bullet-headed youngsters who surrounded the visitors in friendly fashion and clamoured unintelligible greetings. As their heads—for reasons of cleanliness, no doubt—were in nearly every instance closely cropped, and as they were all of them clad in pinafore garments, it was difficult to tell boy from girl. Whether or no it was intentional, or merely to save trouble, this outward similarity of infant male and female had my entire approval. Insistence on sex differentiation in the nursery is probably unhealthy, is certainly unnecessary, and usually means a class distinction in favour of the infant male. One of the children in this Moscow kindergarten was English—a small girl whose father was employed in an engineering works, and who was trotted forward to pass the time of day with her countrywoman. I have seen kindergartens, both at home and abroad, which were furnished with more up-to-date appurtenances, but none in which the occupants seemed more joyously content than they were in this Moscow specimen. The women in charge of it must have had the right way with children.

The 'show' institution for young people to which I was taken was not in Moscow; it was situated a few miles from the industrial city of Kharkov. This was a combination of school, farm, and factory, housing and employing a colony of *besprizornie*—which being interpreted, is *the roofless*. The roofless, the derelict, vagabond children; the aftermath of invasion, civil war, and

famine; who, in the early years of the Revolution were counted, it is said, by the million and infested the country in their bands. Many of those children—countless numbers of them—must, in time, have died of exposure and sheer want; many others, no doubt, having managed to survive, have developed into hooligans and brutes; but others, by the thousand, have been caught and tamed to work in such colonies as those I saw at Kharkov. Judging by some of the stories one hears of the wild children, their lawless savagery and hatred of confinement, their reformation must have called for expert handling and long patience; and before they were rounded up and dealt with, they must have been a veritable plague. In a Frenchwoman's account of her travels, a few years ago, I remember reading how, on her arrival in a town in southern Russia, she found the inhabitants in a state of terror; some thousands of young bandits had descended on the neighbourhood and were taking up their winter quarters there. And she described also how a wild boy in Moscow, when she turned from his begging, tried to bite her; and how she was warned that biting was a frequent practice. It was said that many of these children were infected with syphilis and knew it; when they begged in vain they would avenge the refusal by a bite that passed on the infection. . . . I myself was told that the prevalence of syphilis among these young bandits had been greatly exaggerated by common report; according to hospital statistics, cases of *besprizornie* suffering from venereal disease were infrequent. But, rightly or wrongly, the *besprizornie* were feared on that account; I have met more than one foreign visitor to Russia who believed the story and told me he was careful to avoid them.

The Russian, like the German, takes pleasure in imparting information; so at least I inferred from the instant willingness of those in charge of Russian institutions to launch out into explanatory lectures. These lectures, as a rule, could have been described as lengthy if delivered only in one language; but when, in addition to their delivery by the actual lecturer, they were subject to a process of careful translation by a guide, they stretched out to a length that seemed unending. The superintendent of the *besprizornie* colony was no exception to this general Russian rule, and before I was taken on a round of the establishment I sat for what appeared to me hours in his tidy little office, listening to the unbroken flow of a discourse of which I could only here and there catch a word or a brief phrase. All the night previously I had spent in the train and I knew, as I listened, that my eyes were glazing over—even on an upright wooden chair, it was all I could do to keep myself from actual nodding. I remember the thankfulness with which I realized that even the translation had come to an end and that I might keep myself awake by getting up and walking about.

For our progress round the school and factory we were handed over to one of the former *besprizornie*, a lad who was a member of the governing body: the superintendent had been careful to explain that the colony was a self-governing institution and that his own position was advisory rather than authoritative. What this means in practice one can only surmise; since the mainspring of such a system is character and ability, there are bound to be considerable differences in different colonies. It was obvious, however, that the lad who escorted us round this particular colony had acquired the knack of

schoolboy authority. I am sure that he and his superintendent would alike have been horrified if I had said that—in spite of his bare feet and loose-shirted garb—he suggested a good type of prefect in an English public school. I am sure they would have been horrified—but the fact remains that he did! He was a well-mannered lad, unselfconscious and courteous; judging by their manner of speaking to each other, the relations between himself and the advisory superintendent were just right; and just right was his good-natured pat of remonstrance to a youngster discovered in tears and lamentations on a staircase. A good-looking boy and likewise an intelligent; sturdy as to build and with a good head—broad forehead and deep-set eyes. I should have liked to question him on matters unconnected with the colony—to learn something of his life before he entered it. I wondered whence he came, what his stock was; wondered if he knew himself. About eighteen, I took him for—which would put his birth in the second year of the war. At what age did destitution make of him a waif? how long did he stay one? and what was the prospect with which his life opened? his status before the days of waifdom? Was he a child of the *bourgeoisie*, born to expectation of comfort and well-being? or did he first see light in a peasant's cottage or a slum? . . . It came into my mind, as he led us round, that students of heredity might find a wealth of material in these colonies of Russian *besprizornie*. For here must be samples of humanity taken from every rank of life; the son of the aristocrat and the son of the beggar, overwhelmed in childhood by the common catastrophe; then brought together in the same surroundings and subjected to the same form of

communistic training—a training without counteracting influence from family or private friends. Interesting to know if heredity is ever traceable in these youngsters cut off from the past; to discover whether a generation which does not even remember whence it sprang can be in any way influenced by the tradition of its unknown fathers. If, for instance, in those who have no memory of their antecedents, the tradition of an intelligentsia ever makes itself manifest; or the tradition of a ruling caste. . . . Scientifically and sociologically such an investigation would certainly be of value; but, given the principles which actuate the government of the U.S.S.R., it is hardly likely to be authorized.

We were shown, by our nice boy-guide, round the dormitories and schoolrooms of the colony, all very neat and plain and institution-like—and in one of the school-rooms, I remember, a German lesson was in progress. But it was obvious that the pride of the establishment was its factory section where the colonists, under guidance of foremen of maturer years, were turning out parts of a machine—I forgot the technical term for it. Work at the lathe, it was explained to me, alternated with work in the classroom; those who to-day were busy with their books in the school building would be busied in the workshop to-morrow. I was told also that the rate of output in the workshop was high, the colony doing better, in this respect, than a good many factories where the workers were of riper years. Perhaps output was more than commonly high this year because there was a special inducement to increase it: the fact that it would earn an extra length of summer holiday which would be spent in a journeying—a circular tour—of extra special attraction. From Kharkov the

party would travel by train to one of the ports on the Volga and there take boat; then down the Volga and across the Caspian Sea to the Caucasus. In the Caucasus region they would pitch a summer camp and, when their time was up, take boat again, this time at the Black Sea port of Batoum; from Batoum across the Black Sea to Odessa, and from Odessa by rail again to Kharkov and the colony. And, as additional and crowning distinction of their holiday, they were to be honoured with the company of Maxim Gorki, who would join them when they reached the Volga. Small wonder the youngsters had been putting their backs into factory work and running up the score of their output!

The number of 'wild children' who are still being educated in these colonies was given me as somewhere about three hundred thousand; they are of both sexes, but the boys far outnumber the girls. Girls, I was told, did not take so readily as boys to the vagabond life and, even when they had taken to it, were easier to bring in and tame. It is obvious, however, that the conditions which have prevailed of late over large stretches of country have produced a new supply of 'roofless' children—small independent vagabonds who live, one supposes, by begging and theft, and whom one comes across at night sleeping huddled into corners and doorways. It is useless to expect information concerning the dimensions of this new supply; it may be that the Moscow Government cannot itself do more than guess, but if it can, it certainly will not impart its knowledge to the tourist. Once I put a question direct to an English-speaking Russian who I thought might be informative: 'These ragamuffin children that sleep in the streets—where do they come from and why are they

homeless?' And the answer came pat: 'Their parents must have deserted them.' Considering the scarcity that prevailed in the neighbouring countryside, I thought it possible the desertion of the parents might sometimes be synonymous with death, but refrained from voicing the reflection. The first principle of the good Russian Communist who answers the questions of the foreigner is that the System, the Government, can never be at fault. Wicked parents there are who desert their children; wicked capitalists, wicked *koolaks*, wicked wreckers who sabotage machinery! All these are accountable when things go wrong; but never a blunder on the part of Soviet authority!

Some of these children who live by their wits are extraordinarily interesting to watch. They are of a type—the Street Arab, the Child Independent—that education authorities have elsewhere all but exterminated; we read of them in Dickens and Victor Hugo, but nowadays we seldom meet them in the flesh. Some of them (in fine weather) are amusingly impudent, others are strangely mature in their manner—quiet, unsmiling, self-reliant. Two of them once travelled for three or four hours by the same train as myself; travelled, as a matter of course, free of charge, in defiance of the railway officials. In the matter of travel without tickets, however, these infants were by no means peculiar; the custom of using the railway without payment is general in Russia. It was especially frequent, I noticed, in the south-western districts—the Ukraine and thereabouts—where hunger, presumably, was driving the needy to migration.

The method of obtaining free railway travel is simple and facilitated by the behaviour of the average Russian

engine, which seems to have difficulty in making up its mind to start. *Reculer pour mieux sauter* appears to be its motto: it begins with a retreat, gives a jerk and advances for a yard or two; retreats again and comes to a halt. This process is repeated as often as necessary; and even when the rearward interludes have ceased and the train rolls steadily out of the station its pace, for a time, is deliberate. (As a matter of fact, the Russian train, even when putting its best foot forward, is not remarkable for speed.)

It is when the period of jerk and hesitation is over and the actual forward roll has begun that the gate-crashing travellers launch their attack on the train. From the crowd on the station (there is always a crowd) figures detach themselves and make for the steps at the end of each carriage. How many guards and collectors, male and female, are carried on the average train, I know not; but manifestly they are not sufficiently numerous to defend every avenue of entrance against the deadhead passenger. They do their best and probably have need to; a friend of mine, travelling between Moscow and the Volga (where the train was also stormed upon every opportunity), was told that each passenger who travelled without paying meant a fine for the guard concerned. If that be so indeed, I can only hope that the guards on my train were highly paid officials; if not, I should imagine the deductions for deadheads must have swallowed up most of their wages. The contests between the two parties are sometimes spirited; one of the incidents my friend of the Volga trip described was a woman guard getting the better of a gate-crasher by a hearty kick in the stomach which left him groaning by the line. I have never been witness of an episode

quite so drastic, but again and again I have seen invaders pushed from the step and left behind—to pick themselves up and hope for better luck when the next train comes along. But once the train is beyond the station and getting up speed, the deadhead who has managed to maintain his hold seems to have established his right to accommodation and is left unmolested as far as the next halt. As a rule the intruders travel standing in the 'hard-class' corridors, but I have seen them so numerous that they could not all find inside accommodation—seen half a dozen of them travelling on the footboard of a coach, keeping themselves in position by clinging to a window-sash and, when the train was on a curve and they came into full view, looking like huge flies on a wall. A method of travelling that would be fraught with peril in a country where locomotives attain to greater speed than twenty miles an hour and where it is not the custom for the long-distance train to halt at every wayside station.

For the stowaway each of these wayside halts means eviction from the train and another adventure in gate-crashing. However wayside a station may be, the Russian train is never in a hurry to depart from it; it will always pause long enough for its officials to make a clean sweep of unauthorized passengers. Being aware of this fact, the unauthorized passengers do not wait to be swept clean; as the train slows down, they drop off. Those among them who have reached their journey's end will push through the crowd on the station and be seen no more; those who have a mind to journey farther will move away from the train but keep an eye on it till the propitious moment when it is once more getting up speed.

The two urchins I spoke of travelled for a good many stages free of cost through the region of the northern Ukraine. They were small, they were ragged, it goes without saying they were barefoot; their elbows came through and their knees came through and the ends of their trousers were a fringe. As for worldly goods apart from their apparel, such modicum as they possessed was contained in a species of satchel, made of sacking, and fastened with string to the shoulders of the elder of the twain. At station after station I saw them drop off the train; and I found myself admiring the skill and persistence whereby this pair of infants defeated all efforts to eject them and leave them behind. Early in the journey it was clear that they had no fixed destination in mind; they were merely taking train till they came to a place that, from their point of view, looked desirable. Desirable from their point of view, I imagine, meant likely to afford good begging or good theft; be that as it may, at each halt they began their proceedings by making a tour of investigation. They walked up and down the station, to get different points of outlook; they surveyed the landscape and such houses as were visible. The elder by a year or two was unmistakably the leader; a cool and self-reliant child whose age I should have guessed at as nine. He spoke little, and never to his elders—a word now and then to his subordinate, who never seemed to question his authority; he seemed to have no difficulty in making up his mind about each locality; a meditative glance from one or two angles and a farther journey was decided on. The decision made, he proceeded to post himself and his companion for their next assault on the train. The better to elude the attention of the guards, the pair

invariably moved apart from each other, entering the coach they had selected by its opposite ends; on one occasion this selected coach happened to be the next to mine, and as the junior member of the partnership clambered up the rearmost steps I saw, to my regret, that a guard was waiting to receive him. The subsequent proceedings were forcible and brief—and the junior partner landed on all fours on the sand at the side of the track. I was just wondering if the pair would manage to rejoin each other—whether the leader would await his subordinate at the next halting-place—when, from the farther entrance of the same coach, another small figure made a similar exit that ended in a similar sprawl. Evidently officialdom had had enough and was making a determined effort to get rid of the nuisances; that, I concluded, as the train gathered speed, was the last I should see of the two adventurous imps. A conclusion entirely mistaken; at the next station there they were again, imperturbable as ever; making their customary survey of the neighbourhood and taking up their customary strategical positions. Dislodged from one coach of a lengthy train, they had merely made a second, and more successful, onslaught on one of the rearward carriages. They interested me so much that I desired to have nearer acquaintance, which I cultivated by means of some sweetstuff I happened to have in my food-basket. The younger was child enough to show pleasure at the windfall and take his portion with a grin; the elder accepted his with the same self-possession that characterized his other actions and surveyed me with the slow and meditative stare one notices in so many Russian beggars, and which is as unembarrassed as the gaze of a cow or a dog.

When they left the train at last, they left it of their own free will; turning deliberately into the crowd, into which, in a moment, they had vanished. I wondered what had induced the leader to hit on that particular station as halting-place; what were the signs that, to his experienced eye, denoted comfort or good pilfering?

A queer tribe, these little Ishmaelites! Even when they are caught and colonized and trained to state-worship, do they always outgrow the Ishmaelite mentality and outlook? or will it one day make itself felt in the national life? Meanwhile, those that have not been caught and colonized live their self-centred and unplanned lives in a State whose motive-power is Plan, Plan, Plan and the crushing-out of individualism. . . . And so long as the days are warm, and they can beg enough and steal enough to stay their hunger; so long as they can board a train and find straw to lie on, they themselves would seem to be content with their vagabond manner of existence. . . .

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In Russia you cannot begin too early to train the young idea to a right way of thinking in politics; and of one of the methods whereby the young idea is trained I was witness one afternoon in what the Russian calls a Park of Rest and Culture. (A similar institution in England would, I think, be described less pretentiously as a recreation ground.) A little band of children—a school-class evidently—was taking its pleasure in the Park of Rest and Culture; youngsters whose ages I should imagine varied between six and eight. With their pleasure, however, was mingled the necessary dose of instruction in right thinking; and this took the form

of a little procession of half a dozen children, each of them equipped with a frontal placard in the manner of a sandwich-man. The placard in every case bore an inscription which I was told was the name of a book; and in addition to its placards the procession was provided with one or two megaphones. The band, escorted by a woman teacher, marched into one of the buildings attached to the Park of Rest and Culture—a large, bare room which looked as if intended for a concert- or lecture-room and in which the rest of the class had already been assembled. Having marched in, the placarded youngsters were drawn up in a row while their comrades gathered round; then one after another put megaphone to mouth and recommended to his fellows the particular book whose title was writ large on his own particular placard. Some of the announcements were no more than a word or two in length, while others ran to several sentences; their gist in every case, my interpreter informed me, being the reason why this particular volume was worth the attention of youth. When these solo recommendations had come to an end, the whole row of publicity merchants burst into a simultaneous shout of one of the slogans of New Russia: 'Without books there is no political knowledge; without political knowledge there is no Communism.' That was the end of the ceremony; the publicity merchants and their audience dispersed. It was almost a relief when I got outside the building to find several of these politically minded infants walking about on a sheet of window-glass that, by some mischance or negligence, had been laid upon the ground near the door. In consequence, with evident signs of enjoyment, they were destroying both the glass and their boots; behaving, in

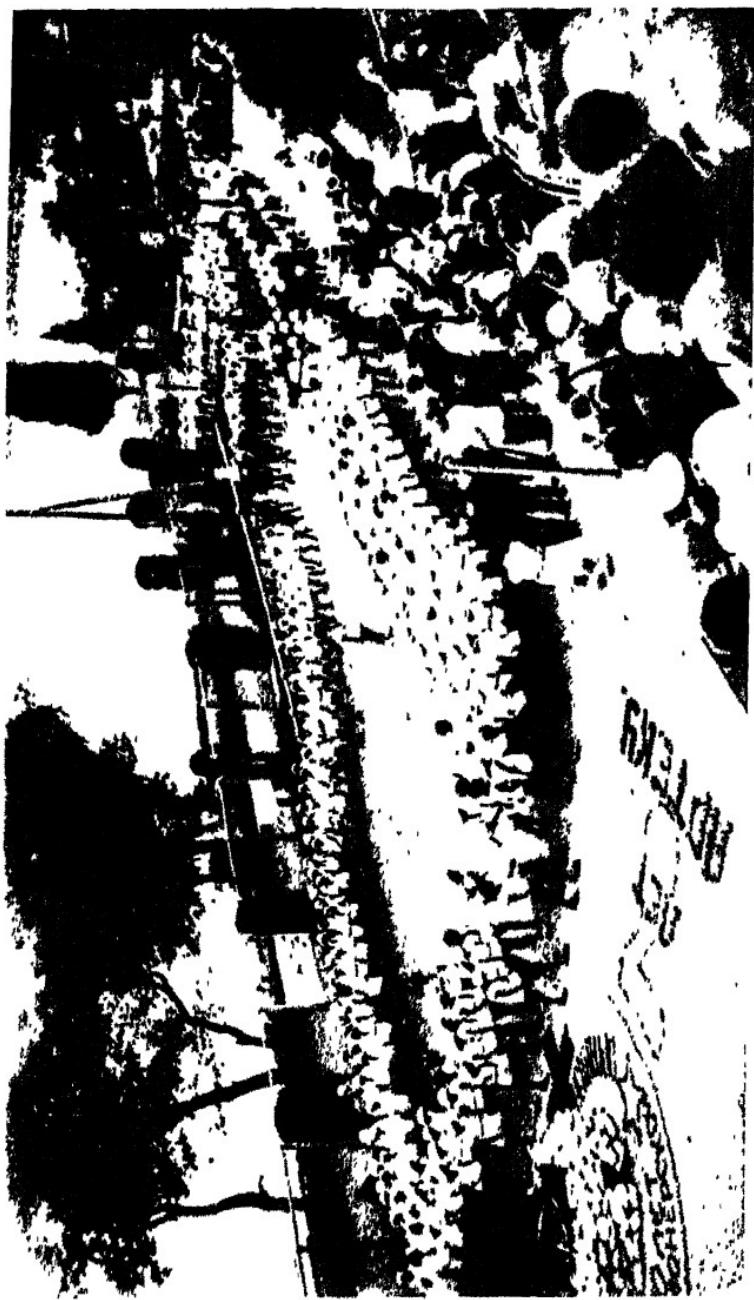
short, like the unregenerate children who inhabit a capitalist world.

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I have read, and have also been told, that the beating of a child is an offence against modern Russian law. 'Of course we never beat a child. If the parents do, we take them to the People's Court.' The quotation is from a book of recent date, *Red Virtue*, by Ella Winter. The same idea was insisted on in the film entitled *The Road to Life*, which has been shown in England and deals with the redemption of wild children. In it, if I remember rightly, an aggrieved gentleman whose property had been lifted by a boy-thief retaliated by striking the culprit. To an unenlightened English-woman the action seemed at least excusable—I felt I might have done the same myself; but that was not the view taken by an enlightened Soviet magistrate who was apparently horrified at the infliction of a smack, and rebuked the smacker with that worst of all Russian reproaches: 'You belong to the Past.'

Here, so it seems to me, is an example of that overzealous propaganda which one constantly comes across in Russia and which, on occasions, tends to the defeat of its own purpose. By all accounts the average Russian is kindly towards children, and no doubt it is the aim of Soviet law to make an end of corporal punishment. But an aim, a purpose, is one thing and its complete attainment is another. We may take it for granted that, in certain circles, children, however annoying, are no longer smacked when they transgress; children brought up on sound communist principles would probably have the law of any parent so lacking in respect for the

younger generation as to shake it or box its ears. But the territory of the U.S.S.R. is of considerable extent—something like one-sixth of the habitable globe; the number of persons inhabiting that territory is also considerable—estimated at over a hundred and sixty million; and whatever may be the case in the future, it is unlikely that, at present, they all think and act in complete and amiable agreement. At any rate this I can certify: that one day in the summer of 1933 and the town of Dnieprostroi two small boys, clad in customary rags, were furiously savaged by a man whom they had angered—I think by some act of larceny, as their captor snatched something that looked like a garment from the hand of one of the boys. I do not wish to suggest that the angry violence of this one man was typical; but I do suggest that, in that particular region, it could not have been exceptional, since it roused no protest among the passers-by, and the only persons who appeared to be in any way distressed by the spectacle were a couple of American tourists and myself. There was a demonstration on the part of a Russian bystander, but it was a demonstration of sympathy with the thumper, not with the thumped. When one of the latter—apparently the less guilty—was allowed to wriggle free and fled off down the street, a man standing by, who had hitherto been a passive spectator of the boys' punishment, suddenly decided to take part in it. As the urchin fled past him he reached down, caught him by the leg, and flung him headlong to the ground. After this added and seemingly gratuitous punishment—which struck me as merely an expression of dislike—the child was allowed to make good his escape; while his less fortunate companion, resistance overcome, was marched off by his



DRILL AT A PIONEER CAMP IN THE CRIMEA



captor. To what ultimate fate I know not—perhaps to a *besprizornie* colony.

I do not wish to attach too great an importance to this incident. It may be I should almost have forgotten it by now, if it had not been for the insistence, in propaganda book and in propaganda film, on the entire exemption from corporal punishment enjoyed by the children of New Russia. But, as I have said, how impossible that all the children in a nation—much less a collection of nations like the U.S.S.R.—should be brought up exactly alike! Rules may be made for their uniform treatment, but some among the millions will take no notice; custom, in this as in other respects, will differ in different parts of the country. Sidney Webb, in a recent article<sup>1</sup> on the training of Soviet Youth, mentions the planning of children's toys and games, and says expressly that there are 'no tin soldiers'—implying that all children's playthings are designed with peaceable intent. Ella Winter, on the other hand, in the book from which I have already quoted (and which was published much about the date of Sidney Webb's article), gives a very different account of the present tendency in toys. 'At one time parents and teachers were admonished not to let their children play with soldiers, drums, pistols, guns; children were not to become warlike. Now the child is given Red Army men, battleships, tanks, destroyers, submarines, cannon. Older children are put through the drill connected with poison-gas attacks. For now Soviet children must be prepared for war, for the coming attack of capitalist nations on the first workers' and peasants' republic.' Ella Winter, I should add, writes most sympathetically

<sup>1</sup> *Time and Tide*, 26 August 1933.

of the Soviet regime and has no word of blame for soldier toys.

Two somewhat contradictory accounts of the Soviet playbox and the guidance of the Soviet child . . . but it may be that both, to a certain extent, are correct!

### *III. THE ART OF THE POSTER*

To the average foreign tourist in the U.S.S.R. the language of the country is mere sound and hieroglyph; few of us when we cross the border have more than a phrase-book acquaintance with Russian—many of us not even that. But against this handicap of an incomprehensible tongue may be set an advantage—a means of comprehension—that other nations do not offer to the foreigner; not, at any rate, in such perfection. I refer to the Russian system of propaganda by picture; educational propaganda as well as political. It means that a picture-book of countless pages is open for your edification and amusement; and because it is compiled for the use of the Russian, this picture-book is often far more enlightening than the information you receive by word of mouth.

The reason why the pictorial poster is so common an object of the Russian street is not far to seek. In spite of the vigour with which the Soviet Government has pursued its policy of education, the Russian people is still to a great extent illiterate; and when you desire to impart information to an illiterate population, you impart it by means of the pictorial image, not the pen. It is where reading is not universal that the art of the didactic picture flourishes; thus the window of a Russian bookshop will often give as much of its space to the poster as it does to the printed volume. As regards the Russian language, the average tourist is also an illiterate, and the pictorial instruction turned out

for the benefit of his fellow-ignoramus is of equal benefit to him.

Some of this picture propaganda is amazingly effective, and it goes without saying that the combative political posters are by far the most interesting. They give you the spirit of the Revolution in its crude straightforwardness and strength; as expressions of vigorous hatred, some of them would be hard to beat. Among the most vigorous are the anti-religious posters which (as in that which is reproduced on the opposite page) habitually represent the religious denomination in the act of inciting to bloodshed. (The accusation, of course, is not peculiar to Soviet Russia; all the world over there are numbers of progressively-minded persons who, while resenting any attempt at church interference in matters of government or political life, yet, when political dispute leads on to war, lay the blame for the disaster on the churches.)

One of the grimmest and best of the anti-religious posters I have seen is not reproduced here, because its effectiveness depends on its colour, and also on its size. It is quartered in the manner of a shield, by an upheld cross, which is gripped at the base by a hairy hand adorned with long nails and a flashing episcopal ring. Behind the cross, which is leading them on, a group of priests and soldiers, charging side by side, fills the lower half of the poster; while the sinister figure of a John-Bull capitalist, mounted on a gun, urges them on from the rear. Soviet hatred and enmity, although most plentifully bestowed upon the Christian faith, is not entirely reserved for it, and in this particular poster priests of other forms of religion are held up to contempt with the Christian. One of the group is a mullah, a drawn scimitar in one hand, a Koran in the other;

# ЦЕРКОВЬ НА СЛУЖБЕ КАПИТАЛА

ВЫСШИЕ ЦЕРКОВНИКИ ЕВРОПЫ СОСТОВИ  
АКЦИОНЕРАМИ ВОЕННЫХ ЗАВОДОВ.

Был рабский магнат "Макартур"  
и надо помаду Бенедикту в Католи.  
(см.)



## ПАПА С „МАМОЙ”

A POSTER: PAPA AND MAMMA

*At the top of the poster: The Church in the service of Capitalism—high dignitaries of the Church support ammunition factories by buying their shares*

beside him is a dignitary of the Orthodox Church, waving a flag of the former Russian colours, whereof the pole is shaped like a gallows. Of the company is also a Catholic bishop, uplifting not a crozier but a pistol; there is a Mongol of some denomination and likewise a rabbi. And mingled with the priests are soldiers, tsarist and capitalist, soldiers with their bayonets fixed; also what is presumably intended for a Nazi, since he waves a swastika banner. All these occupy the lower half of the poster; in the upper half, in the first quarter, is another John-Bull figure who this time, apparently, is intended for a god—a golden god, since over his top-hat floats a golden halo, inscribed with the sign of the dollar. The throne on which he sits is a safe—which the artist has cunningly represented with a crack, to symbolize the insecurity of the capitalist system; and before the golden god and his money three adoring ecclesiastics are making their humble obeisance. In the last quarter is a caricature of the Pope; with the triple tiara on his head and a huge tongue protruding from his mouth, he is declaiming from a pulpit shaped like the towers of Notre-Dame. On either side the long-tongued Holy Father is a smaller pulpit, also shaped like a place of worship; the one a Greek church with its onion cupolas, the other a synagogue. Each pulpit, of course, being occupied by its appropriate and unattractive preacher.

I have been told that the anti-religious poster was a good deal more in evidence a year or two ago than it is at the present moment; the reason for this lessened frequency being that militant atheism looks upon its war against the Church as won. Christianity, it holds, is no longer an enemy to be feared; fifteen years of

anti-Christian teaching in the schools have done their work, and the younger generation is growing up without a God; propaganda, therefore, is less needful than it was of yore. It is, however, a permanent factor not only as exhibits in anti-religious museums but on the walls of any institution intended for the public use. I noticed, for instance, a good supply in the Peasants' House in Moscow, a species of hostel-institute frequented by countrymen when they come to the capital on business. The argument of this form of propaganda runs, as a rule, upon stereotyped lines; religion is shown as an instrument of tyranny—to-day of capitalist tyranny, yesterday of Tsarist. A means of keeping the worker humble and obedient to the will of the possessing classes; in the phrase of Lenin, an opiate. The connection between the rule of God and Tsar is constantly insisted on. A sideline is the fictitious miracle—the trick whereby the priest imposed on the ignorant; and another very popular vilification is the connection between religion and alcohol. The priest is shown as a drunkard and the feasts of the Church as orgies of gluttony and drink. 'Guard your children against Religion and Alcohol' is a motto I have seen on a poster. (The accusation, it must be admitted, is not wholly unjustified; unless all accounts err, drunkenness, in pre-revolutionary days, was by no means rare amongst priests. And so far was the Church, as a body, from standing for temperance that the early advocates of a Russian temperance movement, instead of meeting with ecclesiastical encouragement, were banned by excommunication.) Even among those who have ceased to believe there is sometimes a tendency to keep up the old Christian holidays, a tendency which of course is discouraged by enlightened atheism. One

poster, designed for this purpose of discouragement, bore the legend 'December 25th' and showed a peasant, gorged and sodden, lying asleep across a table—a Christmas tree beside him and a vodka bottle falling from his hand.

Then there are the 'sabotage' posters—directed against that secret enemy in whom every good Russian believes. A typical example of this species is reproduced on pages 120 and 121. It represents a secret enemy whose malice is directed against the collective farm, the *kolkhoz*; and its message, in effect, is that what is to be feared, at the present moment, is not the old brutal, bullying type of *koolak*—he, presumably, has been wiped off the face of the earth—but the new and insidious type of *koolak* who carries on his work underground. The enemy of yesterday is shouting: 'Down with the *kolkhoz*!' The enemy of to-day is a seeming friend who proclaims: 'We are for the *kolkhoz*!' His methods of carrying on warfare are the cunning methods of the fraudulent—witness the abacus, the token of accountancy, where-with he is armed in place of the pistols that his ruder predecessor is flourishing. He is to be found, so runs the warning, not outside the *kolkhoz* but within it, as one of its members or officials. Another effective anti-sabotage poster shows the wrecker at work in the factory; and here also is embodied the idea of treachery, concealed beneath the outward semblance of the loyal worker. There is an ingenious arrangement of a double figure, one semi-transparent; the outward semblance of a workman's clothes, surmounted by the usual mass-produced peaked cap; and from it emerging the sinister wrecker, bringing his machine to a standstill by thrusting a bar between its wheels.

Another department of poster propaganda is that which deals with the threat of war and the need for preparedness. I have many times been assured by fellow-countrymen of a 'progressive' turn of mind that the Soviet Union is the one nation on this quarrelsome globe that really desires and intends to keep the peace, and I admit at once that I do not know enough about Russian officialdom or mass mentality to contradict an assertion so conclusively made. But from my own observation I do venture to assert that the pictorial idiom in which the Soviet Union expresses this entirely peaceful intention is liable to occasional misinterpretation by the unenlightened Western mind.

Air and gas propaganda is much to the fore; in Kiev I remember some especially grim examples of gas propaganda—grim but pictorially excellent. These constant reminders of war and its possibilities are, I understand, part of the activities of *Ossoafiakbim*, the Association for the Advancement of Aviation and Chemical Warfare, which was founded in 1927 and now numbers its members by the million. It is this association which keeps the war peril constantly before the public mind, not only by means of posters but by lectures, the training of Red Cross workers, and the collection of funds which are employed for gas experiments and the purchase of weapons of war. A small vessel on the Neva was pointed out to me as one of these purchases, but as a rule, I gather, the association's gifts to the nation take the form of aeroplanes. On one occasion thirty aeroplanes were presented by *Ossoafiakbim* to the Soviet commissariat for war and—relations with Great Britain being not of the best—were inscribed with the legend: 'Our answer to Chamberlain'. According to

the author of *Women in Soviet Russia*, the majority of Ossoafiakhim's millions of paying members are women who 'have formed a special section to carry on propaganda among workers and peasants'. One of the association's most important activities consists in training the public in methods of defence against air raids and gas attacks; for this purpose it has its 'cells' in factories, villages, and collective farms, and aims, I was told, at providing gas-masks for all.

In this respect, however, the Soviet Union does not stand alone; it is by no means the only power to further civilian instruction in the methods of the war to come. Such instruction is not yet customary in England, where we still believe ourselves an island; but there are continental countries which are including it—like fire-drill—in their school curriculum; while in Berlin, in the summer of 1933, I obtained, for the reasonable price of fifty pfennigs, a pamphlet entitled *Jungdeutschland Luftschutz Handbuch*, which is crammed with informative lessons on the subject. It gives explanatory diagrams of gas-masks, pictorial advice on behaviour during air raids; and provides a list of those various achievements of science whereby we may expect to be blinded, stifled, or choked in blood from our lungs. It adds a brief description of the effects of some of these condiments—those in general use—with remarks on first aid to the gassed; and there is also a note on the topographical and atmospheric conditions which are favourable to the employment of the gas weapon. . . . Altogether an instructive little work!

To go back to the Russian 'defence' propaganda. There would be trouble, I am sure, with our League of Nations Union if we could parallel in England the

following experience of an American observer<sup>1</sup> of the Soviet Union: 'In a model orphan asylum, where there was no child over sixteen years old, I saw posters covering half one wall, explaining by pictures and diagrams the right and wrong way to place a machine-gun, handle a rifle, organize a squad; how to hide a machine-gun in bushes, what position it should occupy on a hill. And a bright young thirteen-year-old, formerly from New York, who was living in the orphan asylum because her father was working as a Soviet official in a village, and who was proud to act as interpreter for the other children, saw that I was studying the poster, and said: "In a few weeks now we're all going to have military training. We're going to get real rifles and practise how to shoot, and the girls will have just the same chance as the boys. Girls and boys are equal in Soviet Russia."'

And the same author quotes a manifesto in the English language which she saw in the 'so-called Chinese University, where young Chinese are trained in revolutionary methods'. The manifesto ran as follows:

'The building of socialism in our country, which is calling forth sympathy and enthusiasm on the part of the working classes of the whole world and of the oppressed nations of the East, is also the cause of growing enmity towards us on the part of the capitalistic governments of Western Europe and America!

'Recent events have given clear indication of the fact that, together with the growth of revolutionary activities abroad, imperialist governments are preparing a new war against the workers and peasants of the Soviet regime.

<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Thompson, *The New Russia*.

'It is only due to the peaceful policy of the Soviet Government and the concessions which it has made that, despite the provocative acts of capitalist bands, war has been avoided.

'The workers of the world, of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and of the East, must not forget that war is unavoidable between growing Communism and decaying capitalism. The workers must learn in time of peace to use the technique of war, for to have to learn it during war means much labour and blood. The capitalist world will send against us its huge technique. Our answer must be the building of an air fleet, the construction of tanks and automobiles! Capitalism will send poison gases against us. The workers must learn chemical methods of warfare, to meet gas with gas. Capitalism will use thousands of machine-guns and rifles. The workers must learn how to defeat the enemy in its very heart.

'The capitalist governments will forcibly mobilize millions of workers, using for their political education churches, schools, and Social Democrats.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore the task of every conscientious worker to help the soldiers of the imperialistic armies to turn their weapons against their real class enemies.

'On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution we propose this motto: "Every worker and peasant enrolled in the *Ossoafiakhim!*"' Only thus can the achievements of ten years of proletarian revolution be maintained.'

This manifesto bears the date of some years ago—the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution fell in

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note this Russian contempt for the Right Wing Socialist, whose way to Socialism is not that of revolution!

1927. But, judging by picture propaganda and other symptoms, the war psychosis in the Soviet Union is as intense to-day as it was in 1927. The likelihood of war and the necessity of being prepared for it with soldiers, sailors, airmen, and gas—this was a subject upon which even guides could be induced to discourse, in marked contrast to their reticence on other interesting matters. As guides, according to my experience, are an extremely courteous race, this frankness with regard to the nefarious plans of capitalist countries—among them the country of which I am a national—used at first to puzzle me considerably; until I remembered that, for many years now, the majority of foreign visitors to Russia have been malcontents—anything but friendly to their own governments, contemptuous of their own institutions, and inclined to represent both institutions and governments in a light that is anything but favourable; many of them, even, of the type that in my own mind I call perverted jingo, who are as eager to decry their country as the jingo is to boast of it. Guides, I imagine, having dealt, in their time, with so many malcontents, think we all belong to the breed—hence their frankness with regard to foreign enmity. British Communists visiting Russia seem to assure their hosts of the evil intentions of the British Government, and in all probability the Communists of other nations represent their governments as equally unpleasant and aggressive—thus stimulating the activities of *Ossoafachim!* . . . Pacifist associations, all the world over, are fully aware of the nationalist danger and do their best to counteract it; but so far they seem to have given little thought to the corresponding peril of anti-nationalism. They might do worse than devote

a little thought to the extreme anti-nationalist—the perverted jingo—as a factor in promoting ill-will between the nations and increasing the chances of war

One of my reflections on the works of art that symbolize the foreigner to the average Russian was that, if these posters do indeed form his opinion, he must imagine the world that lives by capitalism to be much more united than it really is, since the various nations are depicted as acting in complete and nefarious accord. America, England, Italy, France—yes, and even Germany, the wearer of the swastika—we are banded together against Soviet Russia in a real League of Nations, a League of Wicked Nations. . . . So, if he believes his pictorial instructors, the average Russian must think of us!

#### *IV. THE ART OF THE POSTER (cont.)*

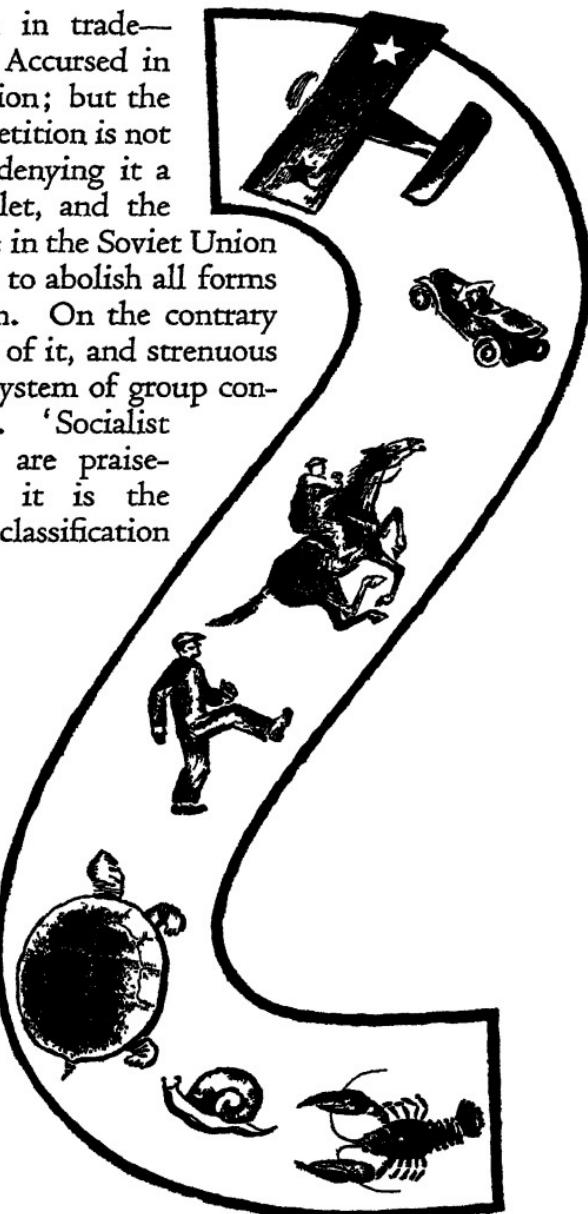
OF the prolific poster output of the Soviet Union, one of the most interesting types is the purely educational; the placard designed to instruct the simple citizen in unfamiliar customs or the use of unfamiliar appliances. One such instructional placard I remember contained a set of little pictures explanatory of the meaning of various road signs, which presumably are something of a novelty in rural Russia. There was, for instance, the sign which denotes level crossing ahead, accompanied by a picture of the crossing—with approaching train and car drawing near on the road. Then there are the posters which deal with health and sickness—whose designers do not shrink from realism. If I remember aright, it is the Peasants' House in Moscow which contains a particularly realistic set, depicting the facial symptoms of various diseases — from the spots of chicken-pox to the sores of syphilis. Nor was this series confined to the complaints of the human race; being intended for the edification of countrymen, the afflictions of animals were thrown in, and the diseases of horses, cattle, and swine portrayed with the same realism as those of their masters.

With us, teaching on the functions and behaviour of our organs is limited to certain times and semi-private places, such as classrooms; in the Soviet Union such teaching is scattered indiscriminately, and you never know in what unlikely place you may come across a counterfeit presentment of the large intestine or a

realistic drawing of a person suffering from ulcers. A friend of mine brought back from a recent journey to Russia a photograph of a communal restaurant wherein, I believe, she herself took some of her meals and where the decorations, to Western taste, were not conducive to good appetite. They consisted of two or three diagrams, affixed to the walls, and representing the human interior in relation to its digestive functions and processes. The scale of these diagrams was large enough for the instruction they conveyed to be available to all the customers of the restaurant; who, while they sat at their tables and consumed their dinners, could meditate on the changes which their victuals and drink would undergo in their interiors. To us there is something repellent in this close conjunction of the meal idea with the stomach-and-bowel idea, but the average Russian apparently sees nothing amiss in it; and unpleasant as some of these pictured organs and diseases are, there can be little doubt of their usefulness as health propaganda. The revolting appearance of an ulcer or venereal sore, by the very fact that it is revolting, is far more impressive than mere words; while in the case of illiterates—who still must run to a good many millions—the picture is the only means of instruction, since the written word avails not.

On the opposite page is shown a form of poster which I believe to be peculiar to the Soviet Union—and which I believe, also, to be in common use throughout the length and breadth of its territories. It is to be seen wherever work is in progress, in the factory, the school, or the farm; it was evolved or invented as a means of increasing output amongst groups of workers by spurring them on to emulation. Competition for private advantage

—competition in trade—is the Thing Accursed in the Soviet Union; but the spirit of competition is not abolished by denying it a particular outlet, and the powers that be in the Soviet Union have no desire to abolish all forms of competition. On the contrary they make use of it, and strenuous use, by their system of group contest in work. ‘Socialist competitions’ are praiseworthy; and it is the method of classification employed in such competitions that is symbolized in the poster — by the varying degrees of speed attained by the creatures and machines therein depicted. A group that has accomplished its best and utmost — more



than was expected of it—that has turned out its work at topmost speed: that full-marked group will be honoured by promotion to the aeroplane class. While the group that has disgraced itself by sluggish lack of effort will be shamed by degradation to the status of a crayfish, crawling at the bottom of its pond. In between these two extremes of top-speed and sluggishness, excellence and shame, come symbols denoting the good, the fair, the mediocre, the under-average, the bad. The principle of this symbolism is always the same, that is to say, it is always based on the speed idea; but in detail it may vary, according to the taste of designer or locality. For one thing, the number of speed-symbols is a variable quantity; in the example given it is seven, but in the comparisons I have seen in actual use, on the walls of factories, etc., it was more often six—while on occasions it expands to a dozen. Sometimes the crayfish is the last disgrace, sometimes that dishonourable position is held by the snail. The train, as a symbol, is interchangeable with the car, the trotting horse with the running man or the bicycle. Sometimes the execution of the designs is fairly elaborate, but most of those I saw were no more than roughly coloured sketches, affixed to the wall of a college building or workshop.

The object of these socialist comparisons is not always to stimulate work in the group—the acquisition of knowledge or the making of machines; sometimes it is the stimulation of money—from the pocket of the citizen to the coffer of the State. Propaganda for the loan which was to finance the Second Five Year Plan was in full blast when I arrived in Russia, and one of the methods for promoting the flow of subscription was the speed-up placard, showing how particular sections,

groups, and trade unions had responded to the State's appeal. At Livadia—once the summer palace of the Tsar of all the Russias and now a rest-house for 'collective' peasants—I saw a rude version of the speed procession affixed to the door of one of the outbuildings; it classified the people employed on the estate—gardeners and so forth—according to the amount they had contributed; this group doing its duty by the State, that lagging behind in contempt. A mild edition of the pillory; and no doubt an effective means of bringing pressure to bear on the reluctant.

Another type of unfamiliar poster was the three-dimensional. Sometimes this consisted merely of huge built-up words (red lettering, of course) calling for investment in the *Pyatiletka* loan; and sometimes it took the shape of large grotesque figures whose purpose was frequently didactic. The two staggering figures shown in the illustration facing page 52 were photographed in a Park of Rest and Culture, where they stand as a warning against the evil of drink. Another 'awful warning' in the same neighbourhood is directed against the obnoxious private trader; the figure representing this unpopular character sits in a funny little hutch—his stall or shop—with the abacus, the sign of the tradesman, in his hand. I do not know whether these figures are intended primarily for the edification of the young or for that section of the elder generation to whom the printed page is a mystery; but either way there is a good deal to be said for this form of instruction by doll!

As regards the pictorial quality of Russian poster propaganda, at its best it is amazingly high: the political poster is the natural medium of expression for Russian revolutionary art. Because it is designed for the eyes

of the unlettered, it is always and immediately comprehensible. No vague subtlety about it, no mistiness in its symbolism; and you find in these posters, as perhaps nowhere else, the essentials of the revolutionary temper; its directness and brutality; its suspicion, its impatience, its savage humour; its exultation over the enemy defeated. And along with these its pride in achievement, its consciousness of youth and vision of the future; and the faith that urges the true revolutionist to ceaseless fury of effort. Here is an art so vigorous and confident that beside it the best of our poster output seems lacking in purpose and in strength. One of the best I have seen was entitled 'Bread' and symbolized the growth of Russian agriculture. It attracted me particularly because of the beauty of its colour; a sweep of golden-red corn with, on one side, red reapers scything down its riches; and on the other the envious capitalist enemy being scratched and choked by the forward-thrusting ears of corn—the proof of a success that the envious capitalist would gladly have prevented if he could! That design, I imagine, was produced in the first enthusiasm for collective farming, when *kolkhoz* spelt plenty for all, and plenty in the very near future. Would the artist, I wonder, feel the same enthusiasm if he were called on to produce its like to-day?

The more recent forms of picture propaganda do not, I regret to say, mark an advance. On the contrary, many of them are lacking in originality; their manner is less vigorous, their matter more stereotyped. There is a tendency to employ the machine-made photographic effect and to substitute actuality for symbolism. In many, if not most, of these up-to-date productions the central figure is the stalwart, handsome young worker

*F. R. Yerbury*

ANTI-VODKA PROPAGANDA IN A PARK OF REST AND CULTURE





—who is more than a little reminiscent of the idealized Socialist of the nineteenth century, as depicted by the late Walter Crane; with, in the background, some form of the machine that the handsome young Socialist has helped to create or to work. The sort of poster that could be mass-produced without difficulty, turned out to fit any need or occasion by a journeyman who knew his job.

Dictatorships, whether Fascist or Proletarian, are addicted to the sounding of their own praises, and, as a matter of course, much picture propaganda is devoted to Soviet progress and achievement—increase in factory output, delivery of tractors, locomotives, etc. Akin to these, but as a rule less sophisticated in colour and design, are the sheets of little pictures advertising the various beneficent activities of the State; bright-hued little pictures, rather old-fashioned German in style, showing the sports grounds where youth can run and jump, the crèches where mothers can leave their babies during working hours, and the workers' clubs with their papers and games of chess.

## *V. BIRTH CONTROL*

THE Soviet Government has done more than raise the status of the woman citizen by granting her equal rights with men in politics, in marriage, and industry; it has also done its best to lessen the natural handicap of womanhood, child-bearing. Not only, like the rest of the civilized world, by making provision from public funds for the welfare of mother and child—by maternity hospitals, milk supply, pre-natal treatment, and instruction in the care of infants. Of these usual methods of welfare the administration avails itself; but it also employs an unusual method, that the rest of the world has not yet ventured to adopt. The method of legalized abortion.

The right of a wife to own property apart from her husband was an important advance in the position of women; so was the admission of women to citizenship and the granting of facilities for full education. But not one of these rights has the same value as the right to choose or refuse motherhood; which is the most important advance in the position of women which has been made since the race developed from brute into human. It means more than the regulation of the family and removal of unnecessary suffering; it means that a woman's life and career is no longer at the mercy of the accidental factor; it is under her control to the same extent as the life and career of a man. And considering its supreme importance to women (and its very considerable economic importance to men) it is a

puzzling thought that the progress of birth-control knowledge has been marked by so little of open agitation and urgency. There has been propaganda, of course, sometimes underhand, for fear of the law, latterly more open; but, so far as I know, there has been no clamorous demand on a large scale for the right to be freed from unnecessary suffering and its consequence, unnecessary poverty. Individuals, like Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant in England, like Margaret Sanger in America, have defied law and consequence, and small organizations have been active; but, in spite of the importance of the issues involved, there has been no popular demand or movement. When one thinks of the clamour that raged in England a few years ago for the sake of the parliamentary vote! . . . which, even if it be not the ephemeral benefit it has proved in Germany, is surely of minor importance when compared with voluntary motherhood!

All the same, and though popular agitation has been lacking, birth-control propaganda is everywhere making its converts; and, in spite of the remonstrances of statesmen fearful of a cannon-fodder shortage, in practically all regions of the civilized world the birth-rate continues to fall; betokening a victory of far greater moment than many that are greeted with shouts and the waving of banners. But if the world in general is decreasing its birth-rate, it is only in the Soviet Union that the right to refuse motherhood is carried to its logical conclusion. Birth control, in the Soviet Union, does not only mean prevention of conception: it means refusal of life to the child conceived—the legalization of abortion. And as hospitals in the Soviet Union are one and all of them State institutions, the State not

only legalizes the operation but provides the doctors who perform it.

I gather that the *abortarium* to which I was taken is the principal clinic of its kind in Moscow and therefore much visited by foreigners. So much so that a pamphlet dealing with its scope and methods has been drawn up for their benefit—I think in two or three languages. This pamphlet, however, was still in the press at the time of my visit; but the surgeon in charge of the institution—a most courteous gentleman who spoke perfect German—gave all the information required.

On arrival at the clinic I and my companion, an American inquirer, were ushered into a waiting-room, already tenanted by two or three young women whom I took to be intending patients. On the wall of the waiting-room was a plentiful display of diagrams; they depicted those portions of the human anatomy which are connected with sex and reproduction. In the usual fashion of the Russian diagram these depictions left nothing to the imagination; and I found myself wondering, as I waited in their company, how the emotion of love, with all that has sprung from it of poetry and music, could have had so unpleasing an origin. . . . Another proof that the beginnings of all things are in ugliness!

We were not kept waiting long; after three or four minutes there entered to us a young woman in the garb of a nurse. She brought with her a couple of white overalls which I and my companion were bidden to don before seeing over the establishment. About the clinic and its appointments there was nothing particular to remark. The building itself was by no means new; it had been, in the old days, a private maternity home

which, after the Revolution, was taken over and adapted to its present uses. We were taken into some of the wards—small rooms containing one or two patients—and also into the operating theatre; but, as we were not medical, the interest of the place was less in what we saw with our eyes than in what we heard with our ears. That is to say, in our interview with the doctor.

One of the first questions we put to him was: Do the women on whom the operation is performed have to give what you consider an adequate reason—such as delicate health or pressure of poverty—for not wishing to bring a child into the world? or is there recognition of the absolute right to terminate pregnancy and refuse the burden of motherhood? To this the reply was that this absolute right of refusal was recognized; the decision lay with the woman. At the same time the authority she had to interview before permission to terminate pregnancy was granted would try, in the case of a first child, to dissuade the mother from the operation; and they would also do their best to dissuade a young woman who merely disliked the idea of losing her looks during pregnancy, or the prospect of having to give up her usual recreations and interests. Such cases, if possible, they induced to leave matters alone; but if argument proved useless and the women insisted—they insisted! Apparently a goodly number do insist on their right to terminate pregnancy; for in this one Moscow hospital alone (and it is only one of a dozen) the number of operations performed per day is about forty-five on an average. Where there is definite refusal to operate is after the third month; where pregnancy is further advanced than that it is considered unwise to interfere. And a refusal would also be given in the case of a

second pregnancy occurring within six months of the first; two operations within so short a time might be injurious to the woman's health or even dangerous to life. Given these precautions, the risk, we were assured, was infinitesimal—hardly to be called a risk; of the thousands of cases of which record had been kept since abortion was legalized, only a fractional percentage had resulted in the death of the patient. This statement interested me because one of the arguments I have often heard advanced against legalized abortion is that, even with all medical precaution and care, the operation has a high percentage of fatal results. This, obviously, was not the opinion of a man whose experience must have been as wide and varied as that of any living authority.

Another question we put was concerning the use of anæsthetics—was it customary to perform the operation with or without? The reply was, that in normal cases anæsthetics were not administered. If the health of the patient were unsatisfactory, or if she seemed unusually nervous—then an anæsthetic would be given, but not otherwise. The answer was pretty much what I had expected; I should have been surprised to learn that anæsthetics were in general use. I had already heard, from more than one quarter, of the Russian shortage of drugs and medicaments; a shortage which must, on occasion, be one of the most serious of the many hardships to be borne in the Soviet Union. Even in Moscow and Leningrad the scarcity is said to be acute, and outside the larger towns even major operations will often be performed without any sort or kind of anæsthetic—so I have been told by those I have no reason to doubt. And the scarcity is not only of anæsthetics; even ordinary drugs are sometimes unobtainable. I was told of a

member of the foreign colony who, needing some commonplace drug—quinine, I think—tried in vain to obtain it by purchase and would have had to do without it if he had not been supplied from a stock kept at one of the embassies: . . . People tell you—and, for his own sake, I hope it is true—that the Russian has a power of resistance to suffering beyond that of Western races; he will often survive the infliction of injury that would kill off a Frenchman or an Englishman. If that is indeed the case, one can only hope that his power of resistance is due to a comparative insensibility to pain, akin to that of the Asiatic.

To go back to abortion as practised in the Soviet Union; and note first that, according to Soviet law, it is only permissible when performed in public institutions and by authorized persons. To perform the operation privately, without licence from the competent authority, still counts as an offence, to be visited with penalty; the object of such penalty being, no doubt, the prevention of unskilled operation.

I have compared my own notes on the subject—which were made directly after my visit to the Moscow clinic—with the accounts of other foreign visitors interested in methods of birth control. They are not always in complete agreement; here and there are discrepancies which perhaps may be accounted for, at least in part, by differences in local usage. Fannina Halle, in the exhaustive study on *Women in Soviet Russia*, to which I have already referred, states that ‘there is an unwritten law of the new Soviet Republic—and not merely a medical regulation—’ which ‘requires every woman to carry at least the first child till the time of delivery, and it is pointed out that from the medical point of view pregnancy is

desirable for a healthy woman'. The italics are Fannina Halle's, not mine; and, as can be seen by reference back, her statement is not wholly in accordance with my information—to the effect that, though persuasion in a contrary sense would be used, the right of decision was the woman's. 'In other cases,' she goes on to say, 'efforts are made to remove the obstacles to the child's being carried till the time of delivery by giving relief, finding accommodation, and so on.' Finding accommodation is an allusion to the fact that one of the reasons often given for desiring to terminate pregnancy is 'the still lamentable housing conditions'; the overcrowded wretchedness which will be rendered still more wretched by the coming of a new life.

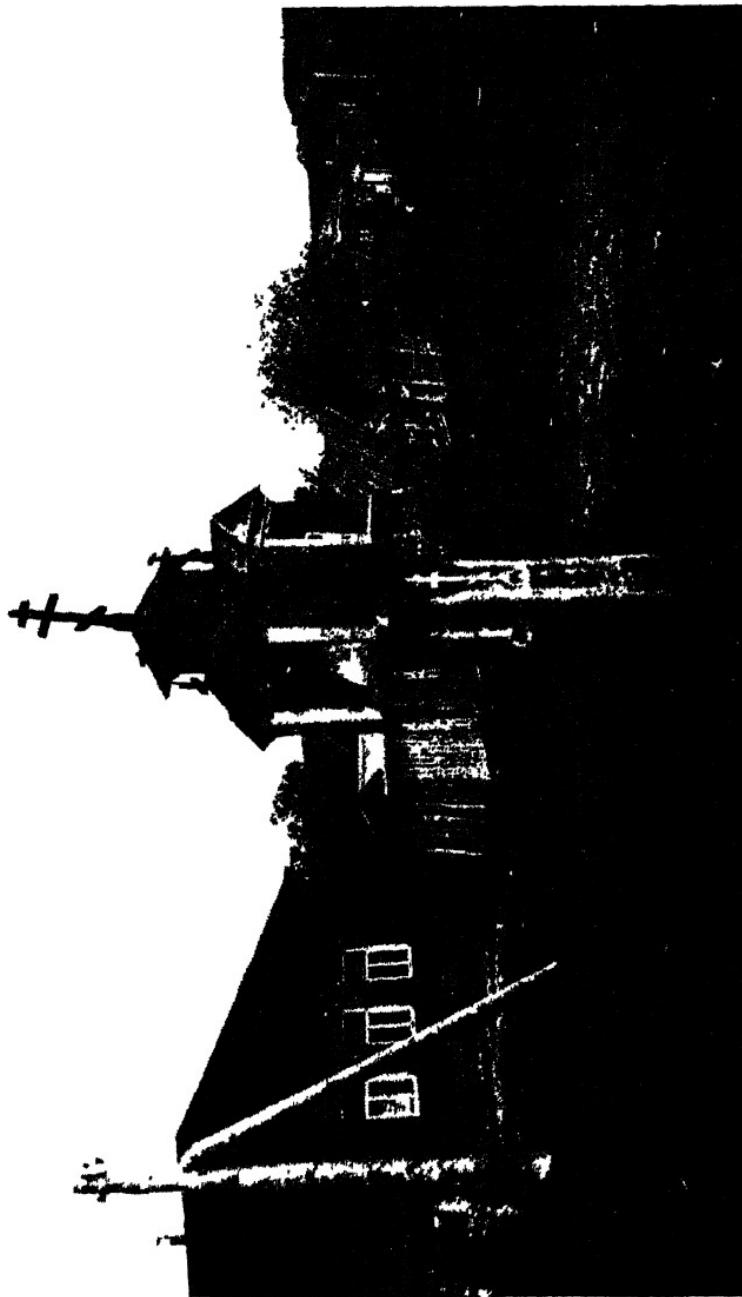
A question I omitted to ask was, whether or no the patients are treated gratuitously. Fannina Halle states that (except in special cases) a fee is charged; this fee is graded, according to ability to pay, while for women in receipt of the lowest wage-rate there is a free *abortionarium* in Moscow. Another inquirer, however—Andrée Viollis, in her book *Seule en Russie*—reports an interview with a woman doctor and quotes her as saying that the operation is always carried out *gratuitement et librement*. This particular woman doctor also averred that it was not usual to perform it on a married woman unless she were already the mother of four children. Again a discrepancy, and this time a striking one; but as this latter pronouncement was made six or seven years ago, it is possible the law—or the custom—may have undergone a change. Or again, as I suggested above, it may be a matter of local regulation and usage.

It was the same doctor who gave to Madame Viollis an account of the conditions which brought about the



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A VILLAGE STREET



legalization of abortion—an account both interesting and terrible. In the misery and starvation that followed on the revolutionary struggle, there was an epidemic of self-inflicted death and injury. So many women were killing and maiming themselves in their endeavours to save themselves from children they could not hope to nourish that something had to be done. ‘Après la révolution, au temps du pire bouleversement, de la famine, nous avions dans nos hôpitaux tant de malades par suite d'avortements defectueux qu'il ne restait plus de lits pour les mères. Il a bien fallu aviser . . . nous avons, nous avions, surtout à ce moment-là, une surpopulation qu'il nous était impossible de nourrir. Pouvions-nous demander aux femmes de faire des enfants, alors que nos enterrions chaque année des millions de bébés?’ . . . It was this state of things, in which starving women practically committed suicide, that was a factor, perhaps a decisive factor, in the legalization of abortion.

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I know of at least one Englishwoman who was permitted to see an operation performed in one of these Moscow clinics; and the same privilege (a ‘privilege’ that nothing would induce me to accept) was granted to the German, Fannina Halle, who describes the experience at some length. She saw two patients operated on, notes that ‘the use of any anæsthetic is extremely rare’, but, according to her, undue suffering was not caused by its absence. ‘One woman lay quite quietly and chatted with the doctor. The other moaned barely audibly from time to time. The whole proceeding . . . was over in hardly more than five minutes. The women were immediately bundled up on wheeled couches,

and one of them, who was wheeled past me, rather pale but smiling pleasantly, spoke jestingly to me as she went.' That is Frau Halle's account of the proceedings; I have, however, heard a description from another source which suggests that operations performed without anaesthetics do not always pass off so easily.

As I noted above, the experience of these Russian institutions is that where the operation is properly performed, and the patient duly cared for, there is to all intents and purposes no death-rate—one in twenty thousand cases was the astonishing figure given me by the doctor at the Moscow clinic. (I think I should have hesitated to set it down, lest I had made a slip, if Fannina Halle did not go one better, and give twenty-five thousand to a death!) . . . By now there must be plenty of material available for the compilation of statistics; in 1930, in Moscow alone, the number of operations performed ran to 175,000. And this form of birth control is not only practised in the capital; there are, said the doctor, centres all over the country to which women can apply—even in the larger villages.

It is, of course, impossible to obtain exact statistics from countries where the procuring of abortion is a criminal offence; but it has been estimated that in Germany at least ten thousand women die every year as a result of an operation which is always performed in hole-and-corner fashion and usually performed by the unskilled. Having regard to the difference in numbers between the German and the Russian population, it is calculated that thirty thousand Russian women would die from the same cause every year, if abortion had not been legalized; while, in addition to the deaths, there would be the many more cases in

which permanent injury resulted. . . . It would be interesting and valuable if someone with the necessary qualifications for the task would work out the corresponding English death-rate. So long as our law on the subject is unaltered, the figures could be no more than approximate; but they could give us at least a rough idea of how many deaths should be attributed to this cause per year. And, if the Russian experience is any guide, practically all such deaths are avoidable—the toll of them would cease, or all but cease, with an alteration in our law.

Speaking personally, this clinic where pregnancy was terminated with the minimum of risk and in decent surroundings was the most interesting and significant of the many institutions I was shown in the Soviet Union. The kindergartens and tenement houses and convalescent homes—about these there is nothing particularly interesting, except that they are new to Russia. We have the same sort of thing at home and usually have it better; the people who are enthusiastic about all that foreigners are doing for children and the sick are very often those who have omitted to inquire what we are doing for ours. But here was something new, something the West had not ventured on; and when one thought of the thousands on thousands of unfortunate parents to whom the coming of yet another child is a dread; the thousands on thousands of women to whom that coming is a double dread, since the pains of childbirth promise no compensating joy! . . . Here are miseries preventible which we do nothing to prevent; and one realizes, with a sense of astonishment, that it has been left to a country in most respects backward, in many respects merciless, to institute the obvious remedy;

and with a sense of shame that races whose civilization is older and, for the most part, more humane should tolerate laws against those who try to find a secret way of escape from their misery. A doctor who, motived by pity for suffering, performs the operation which will save a girl from disgrace or a woman from poverty—such a man, in western Europe, is a criminal, liable to jail. And if, as a result, his patient were to die, such a doctor, in Italy, might be punished by twenty years' imprisonment; while in England he could still be treated as a murderer—though I hope and believe that public opinion nowadays would not tolerate the carrying out of a death sentence. It is this fact, that the procuring of abortion is an offence against the law, that means, in countless cases, an operation performed by an unqualified person, in huggermugger conditions—with, as frequent consequence, permanent injury to health. The necessity for performing it in secret not only prevents the 'criminal' from calling in a properly qualified doctor but more often than not will also prevent her from taking proper rest and care, lest suspicion be aroused. From time to time we hear talk of the death-rate in maternity cases, which, in spite of advance in medical science, remains, we are told, far too high; it would be interesting to know, from those who have made a study of maternal mortality, whether this over-high death-rate is in any way affected by clumsy attempts to terminate pregnancy. . . . In these Russian clinics the women not only receive their skilled treatment, but the operation, as a matter of course, is followed by a prescribed period of rest. The patients remain in the hospital for at least three days, longer if considered necessary; and on leaving they do not imme-

diately return to work—there is a convalescent leave of ten days for all such cases. And this period of rest and convalescence must mean a good deal with regard to subsequent health. Think of a woman in similar case in England, Germany, or Italy; who, after an operation performed in the worst of conditions, is afraid to say she feels ill, afraid to consult a doctor, and drags off to work as usual!

There are so many causes of suffering and misfortune with which we cannot yet grapple, so many pains of the body that medical science can do little for, and so many sources of poverty that we do not yet know how to dam, that it seems, when one thinks of it, strange as well as brutal that we should refuse to tackle a problem that is soluble and turn our eyes away from suffering that is not beyond the aid of medical science—that medical science can grapple with and cure, if the law but give permission. That permission at present the law withholds; and it is not to the credit of the medical profession that it has so far made no organized protest against Acts of Parliament which insist on unnecessary suffering. And it is a proof of the power of survival of tradition that there should be so many persons, otherwise intelligent, who look on prevention of birth as a crime against the race. As no doubt it was in times gone by, when tribes in constant warfare dared not let themselves be outnumbered by their neighbours; in times, moreover, when, thanks to rough nursing and lack of sanitation, the young of the race died like flies. Then, lest the strength of the race should dwindle, it was a duty to bring children into the world, a reproach for a marriage to be childless. Those were the days when the world was run wholly on man-power; now

man-power gives place more and more to the machine, and prolific parenthood in many cases, perhaps in the majority, is not an access of strength to the community but a burden placed on its resources. Yet in our world of unemployment, our world of the machine, we still hold to the tradition of the tribesman!

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It would be a mistake to suppose that operation, as performed in these clinics, is the only method of birth control practised in the Soviet Union. On the contrary, I was told when I inquired—and I have confirmed the information by reference to others—that there is widespread instruction in preventive measures by means of pamphlets, lectures, and films. This propaganda is said to reach even the rural districts, and the aim of the authorities responsible for it is to substitute prevention for more drastic cure by operation. Operation has been legalized because it is necessary, but prevention, I was assured, is considered preferable; and attached to the Moscow Institute for the Protection of Mothers and Infants there is an institute for research into preventive methods—said to be the only one of its kind in the world—and a small factory for the manufacture of its preparations. But, in spite of the best efforts of institute and factory, it appears that the main reason why non-operative methods are less frequently employed than they are in other countries is the usual Russian reason—shortage! The demand for preventives is much in excess of the supply: as with bread—clothing—paper—pocket-handkerchiefs—meat—boots—paraffin—any article you think of that elsewhere is in common use. So long as this shortage of preventives continues, the operative

method of birth control must remain customary. In this connection, another quotation from *Woman in Soviet Russia*: 'There are some, so one of the women doctors told me, who have undergone the operation fifteen times. But the average is seven. . . . She explained such frequency by the lack of preventive remedies'.

Yet, in spite of legalized checks on population, the Russian rate of increase outstrips that of any of the Western races; at thirty-seven per thousand, it is far more than double our own.

## *VI. THE LAND SELF-SATISFIED*

ONE of the paradoxes of the modern world is the contrast between its theory of internationalism and its practice. Theoretically nowadays all the peoples of the earth are interdependent and unable any more to stand alone; potentially they are united by facilities for intercourse—aeroplanes, cars, steamships—which put girdles round the earth with a swiftness unknown to our fathers. Yet the plain fact is that, despite these facilities, international intercourse is by far less free than it was a generation ago. Not only by reason of the labels called passports, of financial stress and its effect on private travel, but because rulers whose doctrines are tinged with dictatorship have taken to discouraging their nationals from acquaintance with men of other races. Soviet Russia, in this respect, does not stand alone, but its attitude would seem to be more self-contradictory than that of Fascist Italy or Nazi Germany, because it preaches an internationalism wholly foreign to the Fascist-Nazi creed. ‘Workers of the World, Unite’ is the message that greets you as you cross the frontier of the Soviet Union; greets you not only in the Russian character but writ large in several other languages. But, despite that friendly, international message, those who live behind the frontier of the Soviet Union live straitly cut off from the rest of the world and know of its doings, its outlook, and habits only what authority imparts to them.

The first principle that authority imparts to the Soviet citizen is belief in his own good fortune. Except for

the privileged, oppressing minority—the class that in Russia was abolished with Tsarism—conditions in the various capitalist states are infinitely worse than in Russia. Save for the privileged, oppressing minority there is hunger and general wretchedness. A striking instance of this form of propaganda once came into my ken, in the shape of a series of photographs displayed behind the plate-glass window of a bookshop; contrasting photographs pasted up in two columns, the one column labelled 'Abroad' and the other labelled 'At Home'. The first pair of the series showed on the 'Abroad' side a block of tenements in Düsseldorf, half-erected and standing unfinished—presumably because capitalist Germany could not or would not find the money to finish it. Its contrast, in the 'At Home' column, was a corresponding block situated somewhere in the Soviet Union; but this time the tenements, being Russian, were completed for the workers' occupation. The second pair began with half a dozen figures on the steps of a theatre—Berlin unemployed sleeping out; and against them a group of employed Russian workmen, smiling and jolly in their factory. Number 3 also treated of the unemployed of capitalism, this time the derelicts of New York City, receiving cups of coffee in a midnight shelter; its complement was a meal in a factory restaurant, the Soviet workers sitting at their tables and falling-to on heaped-up plates. Number 4 went to Hungary for its tale of distress, and showed children in some charitable institution in Budapest being fed with bowls of soup; it was paired with a family of tidy Russian children and their tidy Russian mother, sitting round a bountiful meal. And so on, and so on—adown the whole column through several

pairs more; home-grown prosperity, throughout the series, contrasted with wretchedness abroad.

I stood for a long time outside that window and stared at those columns of photographs; wondering whether this sort of thing—this blatant sort of thing—does not sometimes defeat its own ends. It is true that the citizen of the Soviet Union has no contact with the outside world; that he does not meet us, visit us, or read our newspapers—and that being the case, he may well believe what his propagandist tells him, with regard to our extremity of wretchedness. He may well believe that all, save a tyrannous minority, live in the poverty depicted in these photographs. But is it always possible to make him believe in his own abounding prosperity? Do all the people who stare in at those windows live in rooms of their own and sit down to heaped-up plates? The citizens who spend long hours in bread queues and milk queues and queues for paraffin—are they always filled with a sense of their good fortune? The homeless children of the Ukraine who huddle against walls to shelter from the wet—they would surely be thankful for the warmth and nourishment afforded by a Budapest soup-kitchen! While I do not imagine that the people who sleep out on steps in Leningrad feel themselves particularly superior to those who do the same in Berlin!

Be that as it may, there is one thing that seems fairly certain: thanks to its teaching, the younger generation of Soviet Russia has an unflattering idea of the manners and morals of non-Communist races—a highly unflattering idea. It seems to be an article of faith that the proletariat outside the Soviet Union has no rights, no claim to public assistance in misfortune. One pleasant young woman with whom I came in contact was obviously

under the impression that hospitals for general use were peculiar to the Soviet Union—she even thought it necessary to explain to me the uses of an ambulance. When I told her that we also knew the ambulance in England, and that any one who met with an accident in an English street would be carried to a hospital and treated, without regard to class or political opinion, though she was too polite to contradict in words, I gathered that she did not believe me. Not surprising, perhaps, when one remembers that the wife of a former Soviet ambassador, in what purported to be an account of English life and manners, made the surprising announcement that hospital patients were expected to rise from their beds in order to kiss the hands of visiting patronesses. My pleasant young woman, no doubt, had been treated to this sort of story.

Another time it was one of my guides who, by some remark made casually, revealed a gloomy view of English conditions; and when I suggested that it was perhaps over-gloomy, she announced reprovingly that she had read a work (written, I think, in the eighteen-nineties) dealing with slum-life in London. Far be it from me to deny the ugly fact of the slum. But it is found by the Moskwa as well as by the Thames; and personally, if I were condemned to slum conditions, I would rather—much rather—they were English than Russian. In the matter of overcrowding and lack of sanitation, the Moscow slum, by all accounts, could go one worse than the London.

There can be little doubt that one of the factors making for this poor opinion of the outside world is the early entry of the Russian into politics. The reading of newspapers is part of a child's education and it is,

I believe, customary to make their contents the subject of school examination. Russian newspapers, when they deal with the rest of the world, deal with it largely in terms of the struggle for Communism; their readers will be told of the subjugation of strikers in the United States, of the rounding-up of Reds by the German Nazis, of the jailing of a Communist in Hungary, Italy, or England. To the younger generation of Soviet Russia, Hungary, Italy, England, America, Germany are so many backgrounds for the class struggle!

'Of what the rest of the world is really like, no Russian school-child has any idea. A friend living in Russia told me that a young boy once won a prize in a Soviet lottery and got a trip around Europe. He came back with his entire ideology upset. "I never knew it was like that outside," he said. "Why, Germany is like a garden, the peasants live much better than we do and have nicer homes. And lots of the workers are satisfied."<sup>1</sup> I do not imagine that prizes of that type are often drawn from Soviet lotteries, since it is against the policy of the Soviet Union to allow its nationals to make personal comparison between conditions at home and abroad; I have been told that even persons who stand high in authority might not get permission for their children to leave Russia for study or travel.

This ignorance of the world outside has its child-like and amusing aspect. On one of my journeys a girl who was one of my fellow-travellers suddenly seized me by the arm and urged me to the corridor. '*Fabrik, fabrik!*' she cried excitedly—and I imagined I was about to see some vast palace of machinery, turning out its

<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Thompson, *The New Russia*.





THE DAM AT DNIESTROI

tractors by the thousand! And lo and behold, a most ordinary little factory—the kind of thing that a Yorkshire mill would dwarf. There was nothing to do but play up to her obvious admiration—and thereby help to deceive her as to conditions in the outside world! . . . And I remember another occasion on which, in company with a citizen of the United States, I visited an institution in Moscow where the somewhat patronizing manner of our escort roused my companion to insist that welfare institutions of a similar type could also be found in America. Our escort (like my guide on another occasion) said nothing, but (also like my guide) looked complete disbelief in the statement.

I could multiply instances from my own experience of this poor opinion of the outside world of capitalism; but still more illuminating than my own experience is a story the narrator vouched for. The Minister of Education in a country which is among the best educated in Europe paid a visit to the Soviet Union; during his tour he was taken, as a matter of course, to admire a primary school. Its principal dilated with a natural pride on the spread of education under the Soviet regime. Before many years had gone by, he declared, illiteracy would be a thing of the past; no child in the country who would not be able to read! Education of this type, compulsory and general, he apparently looked on as a Soviet product and monopoly; for when the distinguished visitor mentioned that it had obtained for many years in his native land, he was answered with more than a stare of incredulity—he was given to understand he was a liar!

In man and in community the characteristics of youth are much the same; the child always wants to think well

of itself and so does the young community. New Russia, New Italy, New Germany are inclined to talk somewhat loudly of their virtues for the same reason that a child is often inclined to boastfulness—because youth and inexperience always hankers after praise and esteem. Progress, to continue, needs the stimulus of conscious achievement—so young countries, like young children, pat themselves on the back and exclaim: ‘Just look what I ’ve done!’

It is an unfortunate fact that, in man and community, appreciation of self goes often enough with a tendency to depreciate others. Revolutionary Russia is no exception to this rule; and her depreciation of the foreigner does not only take the form of distorting the conditions of life in capitalist countries; if my small experience is any guide, there is a tendency to belittle the assistance, in men and machinery, received from the foreign expert. I was shown a good many new buildings, in Moscow and elsewhere; I was told a good deal about Soviet town planning; but if it had not been that I was in Frankfort-on-the-Main a few years ago, just after its town architect, Herr May, had accepted an appointment from the Soviet Government—if it had not been for that accidental factor I might never have known that German architects were in any way concerned in Russian building and town planning. As for that pride of modern Russia, the Dnieprostroi dam, I saw a film written round it, which made no mention of the American engineer, Cooper; in the film as I saw it, the construction of the dam was represented as a purely Russian achievement. Over the dam itself I was shown in the company of two American visitors, who were as much tickled as I was by the emphasis with which it

was announced to us that the generators supplied by Russian workmanship were superior to those put in by the American General Electric Company. The General Electric generators, when at work, made the customary loud humming noise; while Russian engineers had made such improvements on the original pattern that their generators ran quietly. We had no opportunity of comparing the volume of hum emitted by the two sets of generators, as only the General Electrics were working on the day we visited the dam; but the difference was insisted on, and insisted on with obvious pride.

There is another inevitable accompaniment of youthful vanity: the sensitiveness with regard to criticism which is generally known as touchiness. The assurance quite frequently made by Russians that the criticism of the foreigner is welcomed is, I think, a tribute to virtue rather than virtue itself. I do not mean that the assurance is not honestly made; they would like to welcome criticism and realize that criticism may sometimes be valuable. But all the same—so far as my limited experience goes—they are on the defensive against it; so much so, that they often see it where it does not exist and take mere comment for blame. Once when I was waiting at a station with a guide who had seemed interested in hearing of small differences in the manners and customs of our two countries, I pointed to a ragamuffin of the *besprizornie* type who was strolling down the permanent way. ‘That’s something you wouldn’t see in England,’ I said. ‘We don’t walk about on railway lines.’ What I meant to explain was that in England platforms are raised high above the rails, whereas in continental countries, Russia included, the platform, if any, is level with the track and one merely

steps from one to the other. My companion, however, detecting depreciatory criticism where none was intended, began with a half-apologetic smile: 'When our children have had more education . . .' I hastened to assure her that our English habit of keeping to platforms had nothing to do with education—it was a matter of station architecture.

Another instance of this eager touchiness was also connected with railway travel. I was watching from the train the process of gate-crashing by deadheads which I have described elsewhere, and one of my fellow-travellers—a young lawyer who had enough German to make conversation fairly easy—was obviously intrigued by my interest. I explained that here was something I had never seen, something impossible in England; whereupon, at once, the almost apologetic tone: 'We are a new country—you must give us a little time. . . .' I soothed his ruffled susceptibilities by telling him that, though travelling without tickets was difficult in England, the practice was not confined to the U.S.S.R., since a brother of my own had often jumped freight cars in America.

Only twice, I think, in the course of my travels did I venture on comment that was not favourable—and each time I regretted it, the other party to the conversation being so manifestly disturbed. On the first occasion I had been hearing a good deal that I could not quite swallow with regard to the prosperity of the U.S.S.R. as compared to capitalist countries, and, in addition, had been harried throughout the day by the sight of the local horses—skeleton horses, skin over ribs, and some of them working with sores. Perhaps it was discourteous of me, but my nerves were on edge about

those horses; so I interrupted the list of blessings with: 'There's one thing you've got a shortage of here, and that's fodder!'

The reply came, Scotch fashion, with a question: 'Who told you that?'

I said: 'No one told me; I'm judging by your horses. They're not properly fed, so I suppose you haven't enough fodder. I know there are a great many things that want changing in England, but if a starved horse like that were seen drawing a load in an English street, the man in charge of it would be stopped by a policeman. It's an offence against our law to work a horse in that condition'.

My poor guide was flustered, but her weapon of defence was ready.

'We have beautiful horses in Russia,' she said. 'Every one knows we have beautiful horses. But there's a reason why they're not getting enough food now. The *koolaks* are hiding fodder to spite us—burying it in holes in the ground. Every one knows that.'<sup>1</sup>

I did not dispute the statement. For one thing, I had no contrary evidence to proffer; for another, I was half sorry I had spoken. I could do no good to the wretched horses, and I didn't want to hurt the feelings of my guide—the friendliest of women, who took infinite care for my comfort.

Another occasion was when I heard, perhaps for the fiftieth time, the statement: 'We have no unemployed'. Thereupon I inquired who, then, were the people who seemed to have nowhere to go? the people one saw sleeping on steps and pavements? the gutter-merchants? and the beggars who came to the side of the train and

<sup>1</sup> See Note B at end of Volume.

implored passengers for food? . . . Again my guide (not the same one) was visibly taken aback. 'You're the only tourist,' she said reproachfully, 'who has ever said we have people out of work. All my English and American tourists say we have no unemployed.'

I left it at that.

## *VII. MATTERS THEATRICAL*

THERE was a time, and not so many years ago, when Bolshevik fanaticism looked upon the theatre as an appendage and agency of government, esteeming that its prime function was the spreading of Communist opinion. If the fanaticism of those days could have had its way, the theatre would soon have been reduced to the dimensions of a platform whereon the Revolution was lauded and its enemies denounced; but the theatre was stronger than fanaticism and came through the contest alive. The Russian stage deals in propaganda, not a doubt of it; but it deals in much else beside. It is significant of the hold of the non-propagandist theatre that when, some ten years ago, it was proposed to shut down the expensive Moscow Ballet (and spend the money thus saved on education), the protest that saved the ballet alive came from Moscow factory workers and soldiers in Moscow barracks.

There was also a time, not so many years ago, when wide-eyed enthusiasts, returning from a visit to Moscow or Leningrad, would assure us that Bolshevism, among other achievements, had given birth to a new and astounding form of drama—a proletarian theatre, specializing in crowd-plays; where there were no essential barriers between actors and audience and where the spectators would join with the actors in producing unrehearsed effects. An entertainment of this type which I once heard described had for its hero a revolutionary martyr of times gone by—Stenka Razin, who led a

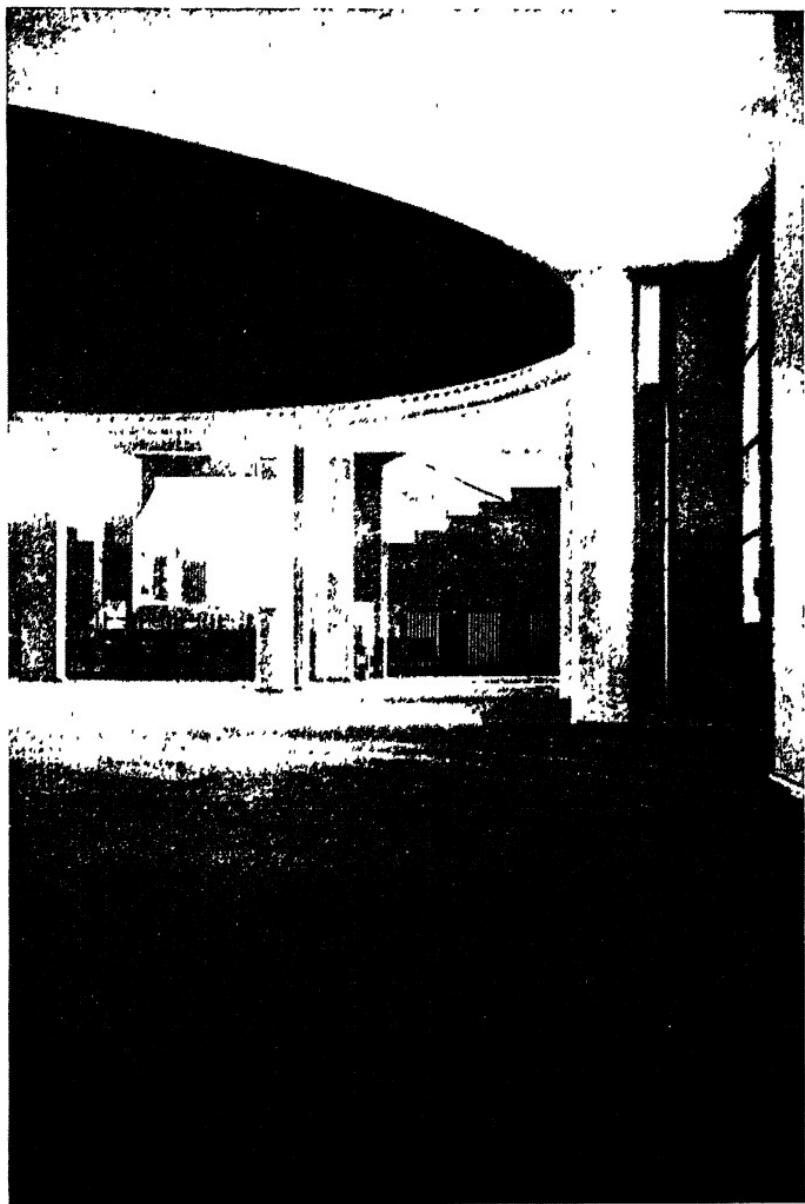
peasants' revolt in the seventeenth century and died on the scaffold for his pains. His following of bandits and revolted peasants was swollen from the front of the house; and as the production took place in the year 1920, it is probable that many of the amateur actors had had personal experience of the violence and excitement they were called on to represent.

Rightly looked at, this sort of play-acting is not 'theatre' at all; it is a game which excites and amuses the players and, like other games, will sometimes be exciting to watch. Fundamentally it was an expression of the popular equalitarian doctrine, the form taken in the theatre by the struggle against the intelligentsia—that struggle which seems to be inevitable in every revolution and in which the slogan is the simple 'I'm as good as you!' The idea that one man is as good as another, in the domain of politics may take some time to uproot; in the domain of art it is soon cut down, dried up, and withered. A people, like the Russian, that has a real joy in the theatre does not go there to play games with the actors, but for drama and opera and ballet; and when it sees drama and opera and ballet, its eyes and ears inform it that there is no such thing as equality in art. When it comes to singing and dancing and acting, one man is not as good as another.

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I could have wished to see far more than I did of the theatre in Russia; but what with the filling up of time by other interests, and what with the expense of tickets for the play, my visits were only occasional. This expense business is serious for the foreigner; once or twice when I thought of going to the opera I discovered





*F. R. Yerbury*

A THEATRE VESTIBULE IN MOSCOW  
Government Officials' block of flats

that the only seats obtainable would cost me a guinea, a price I considered prohibitive. I was told recently of a British enthusiast for Soviet rule who had been citing the high price of theatre seats as proof and illustration of the prosperity of the Russian proletariat; the manual worker being so well paid that he is able and willing to put down a pound or so when he wants an evening's amusement! The plain fact being that it is only the foreigner who puts down his pound or so; the Soviet citizen puts down his seven roubles, which is a very different thing. It is true that, if you buy seven roubles at the official rate, you will have to pay something like twenty-one shillings for them; but that is by reason of a pegged exchange which is frankly a swindle on the foreigner—seven roubles, in reality, are worth but the fraction of a guinea. Theatre tickets, then, are not an expensive commodity for the ordinary citizen; while there are privileged classes, like the shock-brigaders, who get them extra cheap, or even free. Small wonder, then, that at popular performances a seat is sometimes hard to obtain.

It is a mistake to imagine that the Russian theatre and the Russian cinema are wholly of Russia and the new generation. That was my impression before I went to Russia; and well do I remember halting to stare with incredulous eyes at the familiar features of Ramon Navarro displayed outside a minor picture-house. The experience was not unique; whether because there are not enough Russian screen-plays to go round, or because even a Russian public sometimes needs a change from its home-grown products and home-grown ideology, the cinema direction of the Soviet Union does sometimes fall back on Hollywood. Those picture-plays whose

attractions I saw advertised were always yesterday's productions but they were Hollywood all the same—and the fact that they are shown and patronized is another reminder that there are several varieties of Russian. Until I saw the photographs of our familiar Navarros and Garbos ranged at the doors of Russian picture-houses, as they would be ranged outside picture-houses in London and Paris—until then I had been under the impression that the sentimental love-drama was no longer acceptable in Russia. I had been interested in an account I had once heard of the scornful reception accorded to an imported 'movie' of 'real human interest'—otherwise a love-story with the usual trials and embraces. To a Moscow audience (so I was told) the barriers which the story interposed between the lovers seemed wholly artificial, and instead of being stirred to sympathy, they were stirred to expressions of ridicule. And confirmation of this contemptuous attitude towards the Western love-story comes also from Madame Andrée Viollis. She saw in a Moscow picture-theatre '*je ne sais quel film américain; un jeune et riche patron demande en mariage sa dactylo.* Elle accepte après une longue résistance. C'est qu'il y a eu un premier homme dans sa vie et, au cours du voyage de noces, ce quelqu'un trouble la fête. Le mari veut tuer sa femme, l'ex-amant de sa femme veut se tuer et finit tout simplement par s'endormir. L'héroïne le baise au front, prend son chapeau, prend la porte—pour toujours. Rien là-dedans qui dépasse l'ordinaire et sentimentale niaiserie.'

'Pourtant, dans la salle, haussements d'épaules, cris, rires, sifflets.'

'Ridicule! absurde! ricanait-on derrière moi. Lui devait-elle des comptes pour son passé? Etait-il donc

un agneau sans tache, ce capitaliste? Et surtout, que de bruit pour rien!'

On such authority I had taken it for granted that the attitude and mentality of the film-goer was everywhere the same and the staple fare of the Western cinema no longer tolerated in Russia. From my own observation I know this is not the case; as there are people who, spite of the youth cult, bully children in the street, so there appear to be audiences of low-brow type who, in defiance of new marriage laws, divorce and sex-teaching, maintain an interest in lovers and *ingénues* and vamps. I have no means of guessing how numerous is this backward Russian audience; which intellectually, no doubt, is as unimportant as the frequenters of our own minor picture-houses. If I draw attention to it, it is because others may imagine, as I once did, that Russian film-goers are nourished entirely on *Storms over Asia*, *Potemkins*, and industrial propaganda. Foreign visitors to Russia have naturally laid stress on the new and unfamiliar, ignoring the familiar and imported. They have repeated to us such dicta as those of Eisenstein, the director of *Potemkin*: 'If a film does not teach a lesson, what excuse has it for harrowing the nerves of an audience?' and have pictured the Russian theatre either as that 'school for human behaviour' which Communism, no doubt, would like it to be, or as an institution for the presentment of vague intellectualities in the manner of Yevreynoff. 'When I say theatre, I think of transformation as the basis of life. When I say theatre, I believe that the divinity itself was of yore if not invented, worshipped at first in the capacity of the transformer. . . . When I say theatre, I see men following the example of the divinity in spite of them-

selves, even in the case when man and everything human would seem powerless to do so. When I say theatre, I hear a child talking to inanimate objects. . . . When I say theatre, I see an endlessly complicated ceremonial of national life. . . . This sort of thing, to an English ear, suggests anything but an evening's entertainment. (Personally I find it somewhat difficult to discover what it does suggest.)

One dramatic development I had determined to see something of—the Children's Theatre; and I had been only a day or two in Moscow when I had the luck to come across one in action, at the Moscow Park of Rest and Culture. The Children's Theatre has, I believe, its purely entertainment side; a poster advertisement in my possession suggests a song-and-dance item by gaily clad performers of the music-hall type. But its prime purpose, like that of most Soviet institutions for the young, is educational; and in some of the larger cities, notably Leningrad, there are debating societies where the juvenile playgoers discuss the programmes offered them and the art of the theatre in general.

The performance I saw at the Park of Rest and Culture was given in a wooden building, a hall without balcony tiers; it held, I should guess, about five hundred, if filled, and had a stage well lit and appointed. The opening of the doors to the public was announced by the ringing of a bell, a summons which at once brought an audience flocking from its games in the park. It was a free entertainment, not only for the juveniles but for myself and my companions—the only adults in the audience; nobody asked us for money or tickets—we just walked in and took our seats.

In the Children's Theatre, as elsewhere in Russia, there prevails the rule, the excellent rule, that the traffic of the stage must not be disturbed by late-comers. Once the curtain is up, they stay outside—no entry till the next interval. Accordingly, as the play began, the double door which gave entry to the Children's Theatre was closed—to remain so till the end of the act. The unpunctual playgoer, however, is a species not confined to the British Isles; and the shutting of the door appeared to act as signal to a number of would-be spectators. Barely had the two panels met and been fastened with a latch than there came a scurry of feet and clamour of voices, accompanied by bangs on the door. The hefty young woman who acted as doorkeeper made some firm remarks in reply—to the effect, I doubt not, that the door would not be opened and they must possess their souls in patience till the interval. Soviet children, it was once explained to me, were trained to be rulers from infancy; which perhaps was the reason why these youngsters, assembled outside the theatre, declined to give ear to the admonitions of their elder, the door-keeper. The more she explained to them they couldn't come in, the more they continued their rattling and shouting and banging; and as disturbance of the stage and distraction of the audience, this demonstration was to the full as effective as contingents of late-comers pushing their way into stalls. As I and my companions occupied seats just inside the door, we had full benefit of the noise.

The protest of the excluded youngsters was not confined to noise; when the doorkeeper, having given them a piece of her mind, had strolled down the gangway, nearer to the stage, some bright spirit in the crowd

outside must have realized not only that the double doors did not fit very closely but that they were fastened only by a latch. The next move, accordingly, was to insert a thin piece of wood through the crack between the doors; after that, it remained only to apply the needful pressure and the latch was lifted. That done, the doors were suddenly flung open and a torrent of triumphant youth—mostly male—surged forward. Its triumph, however, was short-lived; the hefty door-keeper was not of those who allow their authority to be challenged without protest. She came charging to the entrance with, close on her heels, another young woman of the same sturdy type; together they practically filled up the gangway by which the invaders were advancing to the front; and by the impetus of their charge and the force of their pushes they cleared the mob of youngsters back through the doorway, and victoriously swung-to the doors. It was an exciting moment and I felt that the Children's Theatre, apart from its performance, was worth coming for; the defenders of the pass displayed some courage, as many of the invaders were lads in their teens, and rough-looking customers at that. After this decisive repulse, the noise outside quieted down and finally ceased, the malcontents having realized, apparently, that they must conform to the rule of the theatre and await the conclusion of the act.

I have not enough experience of the ways of Russian juveniles to venture an opinion as to whether or no this display of hooliganism is typical; but I certainly have seen a good many instances of youthful bad manners which elsewhere would be checked by their elders. Children wanting to pass will push you without word of apology—this happened to me on one occasion with

a teacher standing by, and as she did not take any notice of the action, I conclude she did not think much of it. Under present conditions a certain amount of roughness and obstreperousness is probably inevitable; not only by reason of the 'rulers from infancy' theory of education but because (to put it bluntly) the proletariat is not the mannered class. Teachers of proletarian origin, whatever their excellence in other respects, may place no great value on the little smoothnesses that are a necessary factor in the despised 'bourgeois' education. . . . I have sometimes wondered how that 'rulers from infancy' theory works out in practice in a Russian school; one reads horrible tales of five-year-olds announcing they can't stay any longer because they have to attend a school committee; but if education is being run on definite lines (as seems to be the case), these infant committees cannot have much influence on essentials, such as choice of curriculum. The only class that I watched in action for any length of time may have been exceptional in its methods, as it was held in a home for tubercular children; but, so far as outward appearances went, there was little to mark any difference from similar classes in non-Communist regions of the world. The teacher, a man, gave his lesson with an air of friendly authority and the children listened attentively.

. . . . .

The Children's Theatre at Moscow did not run to programmes and I cannot remember the name of the play I saw that afternoon—quite possibly I never knew it. But, thanks to interpretation and excellent acting, I remember clearly the traffic of the stage and its purport. It was not the kind of play that a theatre manager

in western Europe would consider likely to attract a youthful audience; no songs, no dances, no comedians, no gay dresses—no children in the cast, save children of the grown-up variety. Even without the assistance of an interpreter I think I should have tumbled to the fact that the piece was propagandist-instructional; a variant on the eternal Soviet theme of Work, Machinery, and Sabotage. How the play ended I do not know; but in the first act—which was all we could spare time to see—the sabotage theme was set in motion. Something had gone wrong in a provincial factory, and of course for the usual reason—the secret wreckers were at work. Hence extreme agitation in the home of the manager who, I gathered, thought it probable that blame and suspicion might fall upon his own head; so, in order to explain matters and set himself right, he proposed to travel to Moscow and interview some person or persons in authority. His factory must have been situated at some considerable distance from Moscow, because his journey thither seemed to be looked on as an undertaking. It was strongly opposed by various other characters, including his wife and daughter, on the ground that he ought not to leave the factory at this juncture—I supposed because absence might give freer play to the nefarious schemes of the wreckers. Round the question of to Moscow or not to Moscow the action of the scene revolved; there was argument on both sides, growing more and more emotional, until the manager, in defiance of his family's advice, snatched at his portfolio, crammed on his hat and dashed out to catch the Moscow train. And the curtain came down on his distracted daughter leaning out of the window and bidding him—vainly—come back!

As I said above, the acting was excellent and there was no suggestion of makeshift in either the scenes or the dresses. In a piece of that kind there is not much call for stage effect; the setting, for instance, was a room of the plainest; but I noticed that the clothes of both men and women were considerably smarter than any I had hitherto come across in Moscow. In contrast to the late-comers, with their rowdy bad manners, the youngsters who had taken their seats in time behaved in exemplary fashion. It was not the kind of play I should have chosen for a child, but these young people—and many of them were very young—appeared to follow it with interest. There was no fidgeting, no coughing, no chattering—all attention was fixed on the stage. The factory-political-sabotage theme was no doubt familiar to even the youngest; it stares at them from posters and is well rubbed into them at school!

### VIII. MATTERS THEATRICAL (*cont.*)

THE theatre of the screen and the theatre of the stage have both been pressed into the service of the anti-religious propagandist. (So also, I believe, has music, but not with much success; anti-religion is an eminently material and 'reasonable' product, and the domain of music is neither materialism nor reason. I have heard that this type of revolutionary art has not got beyond the caricaturing of religious *motifs*.)

I myself never struck the 'anti-God' form of entertainment, but a friend of mine who travelled from London to Leningrad in a Soviet boat was regaled *en route* by a 'godless' film which was offered as an evening's amusement to the passengers. She described it as a somewhat crude production, its *motif* the guying of Biblical story and the Church. Priests, of course, were shown as arrant rogues, running their religion as a source of income—representatives of a capitalist business who traded in rosaries, sold miraculous cures, and hoodwinked their flocks with sham miracles. One of the scenes was laid in the sanctuary of a church, where an American business man and the priests together were counting up the ill-gotten gains they had made in the rosary trade, and using a crucifix as paper-weight to keep down their packets of notes. Another episode was written round a pretended miracle; the deception being carried out by a bad character who, having entered a church with intent to burgle it, found himself locked in and trapped. As escape was impossible, he resorted to fraud, dressed

himself up in the robes of a saint much venerated locally and issued in this guise from the shrine; his impudence was backed up by the local priests, who saw in the miracle an advantage to themselves, while the awed congregation fell on its knees, believing him one raised from the dead. In the same performance there was a New Testament episode, Christ walking on the waves—the water being shown as very shallow.

. . . . .

The great dam across the Dnieper which has transformed some forty miles of rapids into navigable river is the pride and boast of new Russia; so, as a matter of course, its completion has been celebrated on the screen. In part, at least, I believe this film—entitled *Ivan*—has been shown in England; but, interesting as I myself found it, I do not imagine that it would prove much of an attraction to the ordinary film-goer of non-Russian mentality. The earlier scenes, showing the Dnieper as yet unfettered and raging through its rapids, could not fail to be striking and beautiful—they made one regret the chaining of so much magnificence; and almost equally effective, from another point of view, were some of the shots representing the actual building of the dam. But, considered as an evening's entertainment, the production, to English ideas, suffers from over-thick slabs of propaganda—moral teaching on the subject of hard work and technical education, and especially on the wickedness of the practice we know as *ca' canny*. The slacker whose work was not up to the mark was held up to open scorn; the good young man, Ivan, the hero of the piece, declaring, in the presence of a public meeting, he was ashamed to think that he and the

slackier were natives of the same village. Taken as a whole, it was a variegated drama, breaking out oddly into unexpected themes; at the end, its propaganda took a militaristic turn, sheer glorification of the defences of the Soviet Union. The aforesaid public meeting broke up suddenly, in order that the workers should troop out to behold and admire their defenders—the marching infantry of the Red Army, its thundering cavalry, sweeping by at the gallop, its tanks and the squadrons of the Air Force. Another, less spectacular feature of the film was portraits of engineers, etc., concerned in the raising of the dam—with, as I have mentioned elsewhere, Cooper, the American, left out.

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In the year 1832, when Nicholas the First was Tsar of all the Russias, an Italian architect built the Marinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg. St. Petersburg since those days has changed its name to Leningrad, and the Marinsky Theatre has also changed its legal and official name to something connected with the glorious Marxist Revolution; all the same, I gathered that, in ordinary parlance, it remains the Marinsky Theatre. By whatever name called, it is a building to remember for its beauty; and I saw there a performance I shall not soon forget. Nothing strange or revolutionary about it; memorable only because it was excellently done. A performance of the opera *Eugene Onegin*, written round Pushkin's classic story.

All continental entertainments seem to begin unpunctually and, if I am to judge by my own experience, Russian entertainments are the most unpunctual of the lot. Before I went to Russia I thought Italy had it;

but in sheer disregard for the clock, the Muscovite outdoes the Latin. On one occasion when I had taken a ticket for a concert, billed for eight, I was kindly warned by the clerk at my hotel that the advertised hour was a figure of speech and I should waste my time if I turned up much before nine. I thought this was probably a slight exaggeration and arrived at the hall at eight-thirty, only to find that the kindly clerk had spoken no more than the truth. It is true the doors of the concert hall were open; I could go in if I liked, but, had I gone in, I should have sat there all alone. Having ascertained that orchestra and audience alike were lacking, I went for another half-hour's stroll—and even then I had a tedious time to wait.

The Marinsky performance was not so tardy in beginning; still even there I had plenty of time, after finding my seat, to take stock of my neighbours and surroundings. An audience, I decided, that looked at in the mass, might have been an Old Vic audience; there was the same—let us say unpretentiousness, as regards its clothes. An Old Vic audience, however, would have been more exuberant in its expressions of approval—have given a stronger impression of enjoyment. . . . Curious, the national differences in appreciation; there were one or two items in *Eugene Onegin* that in a London theatre would have brought down the house and that in the Marinsky were received in silence. One of them was in a ballroom scene, an enchanting ballroom scene; the costumes (of a century ago) largely picturesque-military, and all of them delightful. As for the dancing, it was what one has learned to expect from Russians: it was vigorous, it was gay and spontaneous. As the whirl of a country dance came to an

end I thought I had never seen anything jollier; when the band crashed out its last chord I began to applaud as a matter of course—and then suddenly pulled up as I realized that I was applauding alone. Personally I could not imagine how any audience that was not made of stone could resist the appeal of that wondrous dance—but there it was, this particular audience took it quietly. Perhaps dancing does not appeal very strongly to the people of Leningrad; although it was not at any time violently enthusiastic, the Marinsky audience showed appreciation of the efforts of the singers. By the by, our rule that the action of an opera should not be interrupted by applause does not hold good in the Russian theatre, and a solo number was duly rewarded with its round. This, I may say, on that night was well deserved—for me it was a night of real enjoyment. As for the stage setting—designed, I was told, by a well-known architect—it had the rare merit of being original without eccentricity.

A point of real interest was that there was nothing revolutionary about that production; on the contrary, it was a classic of the tsarist era, played in accordance with the traditions of the tsarist stage. There was business in it that must have been handed on by elder actors to the new revolutionary stock; for instance, the business connected with the arrival and greeting of an elderly grand duchess. The younger players, untaught by tradition, would never have imagined the odd mingling of familiarity and ceremony with which the kissing of her hands was carried through—they would certainly have invented something less hurried and more humble.

. . . I found myself wondering what is the effect upon the younger generation of these scenes representing the

manners and costumes of the much despised past. Certainly they take pleasure in the gaiety of uniform and ball dress that contrasts with their own daily drabness; and what we take pleasure in we cannot find wholly abhorrent. In all probability it is the daily drabness of Russian surroundings that accounts for the continued popularity of opera—an unrealistic, spectacular form of entertainment.

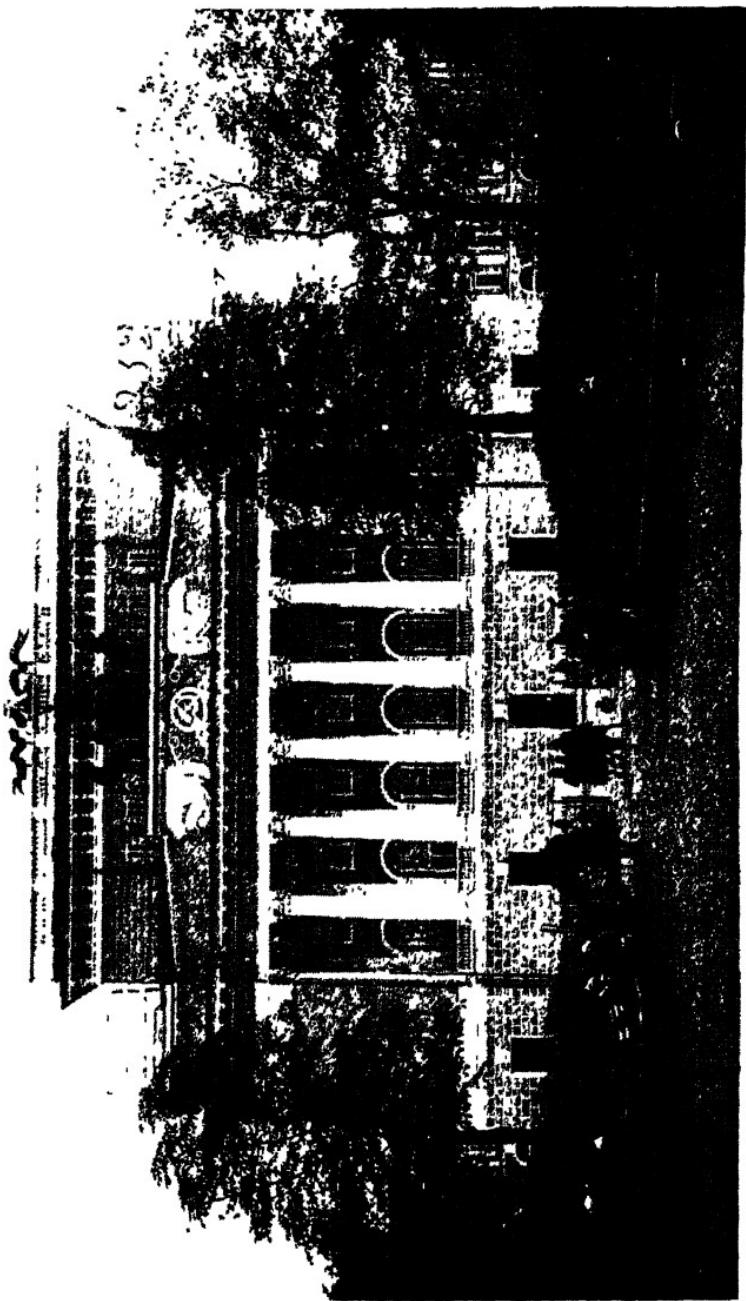
The one drawback to that evening at the Marinsky Theatre was the length, the stupendous length of the intervals. The Russian, as a race, seems able to do with very little sleep; and as it appears to be a matter of indifference what hour of the morning he goes to bed, I conclude it is also a matter of indifference how late his entertainments drag on. There are five acts to the opera of *Eugene Onegin*, and as some of them were considerably shorter than the intervening blanks, it was close on midnight when the curtain fell on the fourth. As I had to be up fairly early in the morning and as, judging by previous experience of the intervals, it might be anything up to half an hour before the fifth act got under weigh, I decided reluctantly to miss it and make for my bed. But though I missed the last act of *Eugene Onegin*, the evening had something still to give me; I walked back to my hotel through the 'white night' of the North. The city that I still in my mind call St. Petersburg is always beautiful, but perhaps it is most beautiful in the pallid grey that is midnight in a northern June.

Before I had seen the second capital of Russia I had learned to call it by its modern name of Leningrad; but having seen it, I go back to the name that rightly belongs to it, because built into its stones. Lenin has

a statue here which someone put up yesterday; Lenin, it is true, made revolution here, but if, as young Russia is taught to believe, he were the giant of all men who ever walked this earth—even so, he had nothing to do with the making of St. Petersburg. That was the work of another ruthless giant who turned his back on Moscow, and the tradition of Moscow, as Lenin two hundred years later turned his back on the city of Peter and Peter's tradition; who in his fever for the new and his recklessness of suffering built the capital that gave him his window upon Europe—on the marshes of his Neva and the bodies of the men who drove his piles.

Even good Communists can feel that Leningrad is a misnomer; it was a very good Communist who once said to me that the imprint of the old days was so plain on the city that he could not think of it by its post-revolutionary title. . . . All that really matters, of nobility and beauty, all that makes it individual was planned and carried out under the dynasty of Romanov. A repellent race, often brutal, sometimes squalid; but with a redeeming quality, not given to all rulers—they knew how to choose their architects. Whatever their narrowness in other respects, as makers of a city they were gifted with spaciousness of mind.

Noteworthy that, under whatever regime, the building of Russia has been largely the work of the foreigner. The Soviet Government has brought architects from abroad, even as did Peter and Catherine and Nicholas—even as did Ivan the Terrible when he summoned the Italian who built the Kremlin wall and towers. (And who not only built the Kremlin wall but topped it with the swallow-tail battlements which are hall-mark and sign of the Ghibelline.) Nowadays it is a former town



ALEXANDRINSKY THEATRE, LENINGRAD



architect of Frankfort who plans for growing industry and the extension of cities; in the epoch of the tsars it was the Italians Rossi and Guarenghi who designed public buildings and planned streets.

Perhaps because Peter was once carpenter in Zaandam there are streets in his capital that remind you of Holland—streets with canals and rows of trees. Along one such I walked at white midnight, after I had left the Marinsky Theatre—and stopped to wonder at a building on the farther side of the canal: in the neo-classic style with a long pillared frontage; a public building or, perhaps, in bygone days, the hotel of some opulent aristocrat? . . . And suddenly, as I looked, its magnificence was familiar; not from actuality but as pictured. The Dutch canal, the trees, the long frontage, the great door—through which, by night, was once borne a dead man. . . . The Youssourov Palace—whence Rasputin's body was carried to the Neva by the men who had made an end of him.

Farther on, a few yards from my hotel, in the open space opposite St. Isaac's Cathedral, a man, a tall young man, lay stretched on the ground, flat and motionless. He may have been sleeping there because he had no roof to shelter him; he may have been no more than overcome with drink; he looked gaunt enough to be dead. Drunk, dead, or asleep, he lay outstretched in the public view, and nobody took any notice.

## *IX. MARRIAGE—MADE AND UNMADE*

ONE thing every one knows about Soviet Russia: that divorce is attainable with ease. Being easy, as a matter of course it is cheap—cheap, that is to say, for the good proletarian; for, like other Russian commodities, it varies in price according to the status of the purchaser. If you belong to the privileged proletarian class and produce your trade-union card in court, you can get rid of your partner for the trifling sum of two roubles; it is difficult to say exactly what this represents in English money—even in the terms of a faked exchange it would only be somewhere round six and sixpence, which cannot be considered exorbitant. Perhaps the best way to realize the cheapness of divorce proceedings is to compare their cost with that of other commodities. Sugar in the co-operative shops I have seen priced at six to seven roubles a pound; butter, when there is any, may cost over twenty roubles in the open market, though I have heard that there are a few favoured ‘closed’ shops in which a minority of the highly privileged can obtain it for about four roubles. (Again, of course, when there is any butter—which, by all accounts, is not often.) Still, taking the lowest price as standard, the cost of divorce proceedings runs to something like half a pound of butter. While if you take the butter standard of the open market, it is not much more expensive to dissolve your marriage than to treat yourself to an ounce! These terms, however, are for the proletariat only;

should you have the misfortune to belong to a class on which Communism frowns—should you, for instance, be a former employer, a *koolak*, or a private trader—then, I was told, the price will be considerably higher. What exactly it runs to I could not ascertain; perhaps it varies in different cases.

With us marriages are made in a church or a registry office and unmade by a judge in a divorce court; in the Soviet Union the processes of making and unmaking are performed in the same place and entrusted to the same official. The divorce case I witnessed in a registry office followed hard on the heels of a wedding.

It was a case of the inexpensive, two-rouble order; the petitioner, a woman, produced the *pièce d'identité* (I think a trade-union card) which entitled her to low-rate proceedings. Her age, at a guess, I should put at thirty-five; she was dressed, like the generality of the Russian world, in garments of a nondescript hue. Not at all bad-looking, though somewhat haggard as to feature; sallow of complexion but red as to mouth—not natural red but a plentiful layer of lipstick. No embarrassment about her; she entered in businesslike fashion and took her seat at the registrar's table—the registrar being also a woman. In response to demand, she produced the necessary papers and gave particulars of the marriage she wished to dissolve. It was not a marriage of long duration, having lasted only half a year; but even that short time had been longer than she found agreeable, and it turned out that she would have applied for her divorce a good deal earlier but for her impression that it could not be granted until six months after her marriage. This, as the registrar hastened to inform her, was an impression wholly mistaken; a Russian marriage

can be made and unmade in the course of twenty-four hours.

It is necessary, it seems, to give a reason for divorce—you do not merely ask for it; so the petitioner, having produced her papers, went on to the story of her matrimonial troubles, which an interpreter translated for my benefit. The six-months' marriage which had turned out so badly had been preceded by another divorce—this time on the part of the unsatisfactory husband. He, when he fell for the lady of the lipstick, left a child as well as a wife and, the first rapture of the new infatuation over, his heart began to yearn for this discarded family—a fact which did not improve the relations between himself and wife number two. Nor was this inconstancy his only drawback as a husband; once married, he revealed a weakness for strong drink which he had presumably managed to conceal during courtship. Between drink and the cooling of affection, wife number two soon regretted her bargain; accordingly she had made up her mind to get rid of him, and with the registrar's aid she did so very briskly—in something like a quarter of an hour.

In this case, as the husband had also repented his bargain, there could be little doubt that he was a consenting party to divorce and aware, though he did not put in an appearance, that his wife was making her call at the registrar's office. But the result of that call would have been just the same if he had known nothing of her change of heart and mind—if his own feelings had never cooled and he had been desirous of continuing their marital relationship. The will of one partner suffices to dissolve a Russian union; there is no need to ask the opinion or consent of the other. Make up





STATUE OF LENIN, LENINGRAD

your mind you have had enough of it—you like someone else better—have your interview with the registrar and the fetters of marriage are broken. What is more, when your interview with the registrar is over and you walk from the court a free man or woman, you need not even inform the divorced one of the fateful step you have taken. That little formality the court will also discharge for you; it sends a legal notice to ex-husband or wife stating that divorce has taken place.

There would seem to be dramatic possibilities in this method of procedure. In the Russian husband returning home from work, expectant of supper and a welcome from his wife and family, and finding instead a note from the registrar, a supperless table, and his family departed, bag and baggage! For by Soviet law, when divorce takes place, the children go with the mother; the father, of course, being called on to pay his due share of their maintenance. Voluntary arrangements to the contrary can be made between separating parents; but, unless and until she resigns it, the right of the mother is paramount.

Here be it noted that if the law makes it easy for man and wife to part, other causes occasionally put obstacles in the way of separation. Divorce means the breaking in twain of a household, and in the Soviet Union it is one thing to sever the matrimonial bond and another to find yourself a room. Cases have been known of ex-husbands and wives who, inhabiting the frequent one-room dwelling, have perforce continued to share it after their divorce—stringing up a curtain to divide it into separate dwellings. This also is a situation which has obvious possibilities of drama. If divorce were unwelcome to one of the parties—say the

husband! And if his ex-wife (whom he still desired) introduced her new husband into one of the curtained-off properties—then the drama might be of the strongest!

There is, I understand, no limit set in Russia to the number of weddings and the number of divorces attainable by any one citizen; theoretically you may register a marriage and separate every week in the year—or every day. Actually, like every other nation and community, Soviet Russia, in addition to its matrimonial laws, has its code of matrimonial behaviour—which nowadays does not encourage too frequent a change of partners. In Soviet Russia, as everywhere else, the outburst of licentiousness which followed on the war has of late years markedly decreased. The Communist Party is understood to frown on loose living among its adherents; the energies of those who serve the party must not be wasted in debauch and amorous amusement. The era of open licentiousness, when any form of temperance in sexual life was jeered at as *bourgeois*—that era is of yesterday. The ‘glass-of-water theory’, which made indulgence of the sexual impulse as much a matter of course as the quenching of thirst—that theory has declined in popularity.

Lenin, to do him justice, never approved of that theory. ‘This glass-of-water theory,’ he told Clara Zetkin, ‘has turned part of our youth quite mad. For many young lads and girls it has become a decree from heaven. Its adherents assert that it is Marxist. I want none of that Marxism. The matter is not by any means as simple as all that. In sexual life it is not only that which nature gave that comes into play; it is also a question of that which culture has produced, whether

lofty or base. Very well, then! Thirst must be satisfied. But does the normal man, in normal circumstances, lie down in the muddy street and drink out of a puddle? Or even out of a glass when the rim has been smeared by many lips? But the social side is more important than everything else. The drinking of water is really an individual matter. Love, on the other hand, requires two people, and a third, a new life, can come into existence. This state of affairs presents a social interest, a duty towards the community.

‘As a Communist, I have not the slightest sympathy with the glass-of-water theory, even if it is given the attractive label of “Love made free”. Besides, this “freeing” of love is neither new nor communistic. You will remember that about the middle of the last century it used to be preached in polite literature and called “the Emancipation of the Heart”. As practised by the bourgeoisie it was revealed as the emancipation of the flesh. Not that I have any wish to preach asceticism. I should not dream of it. Communism should not bring asceticism into life, but the joy and vigour which is attained in part through the fulfilment of love. In my opinion, however, the hypertrophy in sexual matters which we so often observe nowadays does not add joy and vigour to life, it takes it away. In time of revolution that is bad, very bad. Youth needs a joyful and vigorous life. Healthy sport, gymnastics, swimming, tramping, physical exercises of every kind, many-sided intellectual interests, learning, study, research, and as far as possible in common! All that will give young people more than these everlasting lectures and discussions about sexual problems and so-called drinking life to the dregs. Healthy bodies, healthy minds!

Neither monks nor Don Juans, nor yet that half-and-half product, the German Philistine.

'The Revolution calls for concentration and yet more energy, on the part of the masses and on the part of the individual. It will not tolerate a condition of orgy, such as is normal for d'Annunzio's decadent heroes and heroines. Licentiousness in sexual life is *bourgeois* and a symptom of decadence. The proletariat is an ascending class and it has no need of intoxication either as narcotic or as stimulant. Self-control, self-discipline, is not slavery.'

Such was Lenin's protest against the excesses of the New Morality; and if it had not much effect at the time it was uttered—about 1920—it found more acceptance later on, when the fury of revolutionary licentiousness was wearing itself out and producing its natural reaction.

Marriage in the Soviet Union needs no formalities; it is not even necessary to register it—many people don't. An unregistered marriage is just as legal as one that the court has taken note of; the only disadvantage about the former is that in case of divorce or proceedings for alimony, proof of the marriage will have to be established, whereas registration is proof in itself. What constitutes a marriage in the eye of the law is lasting cohabitation and the existence of a joint household.

The conditions under which a marriage is registered are that the parties are eighteen years of age and unmarried—an unregistered union counting as marriage until dissolved by divorce. They are required to sign a declaration to the effect that they are free of venereal disease; when such statements are discovered to be incorrect, the persons making them are punished by forced labour. When I asked what that would mean, I was

told that part of their earnings would be appropriated by the State—the courts deciding on the percentage, after consideration of their expenses and responsibilities. A Russian wife does not, as a matter of course, adopt her husband's name; at registration the parties state what they have decided and how they wish to be known in the future. Sometimes the wife takes the husband's name, occasionally the husband takes the wife's; frequently they make no change from their unmarried style.

The walls of the court where I saw my divorce case were papered with the usual educational propaganda. There were pictorial posters showing the right sort of clothing for babies; there were addresses of centres where advice could be obtained on pregnancy and birth control. There was information with regard to venereal disease and its sources of infection—very sound and useful, no doubt, but curiously unlike one's idea of wedding atmosphere. And even more out of place, a percentaged analysis of the causes of irregular sexual relations—in-toxication, celibacy, desire for variety, and so on. . . . Very unromantic, very Russian!

NOTE.—Fannina Halle, to whose authority I am always inclined to bow, says expressly that as the State merely *registers* marriages and divorces, there are no divorce suits as we understand them and no causes for divorce need be stated. ‘The party who desires a divorce is not required to give any further explanation.’ Theoretically this may be the case, but I wonder if it is always so in practice? Certainly the woman whose ‘case’ I witnessed did give explanations and was asked questions by the registrar. Also there was another foreign visitor to the court, an American, who had evidently heard stories connected with abuse of divorce, and with repeated marriage as a substitute for prostitution. The answer to one of her questions was that too frequent marriage and divorce, to the extent of abuse, would not be allowed; but I could not make out what authority would interfere to prevent the abuse.

## X. MOSCOW

IT was on my way home, through Poland, that I was asked by a Pole who himself had visited Moscow what was the first impression of strangeness that Moscow had given me. I told him, but found it was not the same as his; but in part, at least, the difference was accounted for by the fact that I arrived in Moscow in the middle of May, while his first visit was paid in the winter months, the season of long nights.

What struck him, then, was the lighting, the illumination of the houses; as you walked along the streets there was brightness everywhere, every window gleamed in every house. At first he was puzzled by this seeming extravagance in the Moscow citizen, and then suddenly the reason dawned on him. A light was shining in every room because every room in every house was a separate dwelling—was kitchen and sitting-room and bedroom to at least one family. Very few buildings in the Russian capital where there was a separate room which could be left dark till the hour of bedtime! That at the time of his visit was (and I should imagine still is) a luxury all but unknown to the citizen of Moscow. Even in the modern blocks of tenements which have been built, as the equivalent of our subsidy houses, to mitigate the evil of overcrowding—in one I was shown over, according to Western ideas, the allowance of house-room per family was scanty. There was, of course, a public section of the building: a clubroom, a kindergarten where children were cared for while their mothers were

at work, and a public dining-room; still, in spite of these facilities, the first little flat into which I was shown—and which was obviously looked on as a favourable specimen—struck me as somewhat close-packed. It was a two-roomed dwelling, its immaculate tidiness suggesting preparation for the visit; occupied, at the moment, by one old lady, also immaculately tidy. The two rooms, opening one out of the other, were small, and looked perhaps smaller than they actually were because each contained a good-sized bed; and I learned on inquiry that the household consisted of four persons—the tidy old lady and her husband occupying one of the rooms, her son and his wife the other. An improvement, no doubt, on conditions in the ordinary Russian lodging, but still fairly close quarters, considering the size of the rooms. I may mention that the only public part of the building which my escort was not anxious to exhibit was the region devoted to sanitary arrangements—which it was realized apparently were not up to Western standard. They were passed by (on my part quite willingly, since their presence made itself known from a distance) with the explanation that improvements were shortly to be made.

The second establishment to which I was introduced was larger; it ran to four rooms and a passage and was occupied by a family of six. It was also more prosperously furnished, in a style reminiscent of the Victorian lodging-house, which I gather is admired by the modern Russian artisan. This superior prosperity was due, no doubt, to the fact that it was tenanted by one of the privileged class of *udarniki*, or shock-brigaders—an energetic-looking gentleman whom I could well imagine as a driving force in factory or workshop, keeping

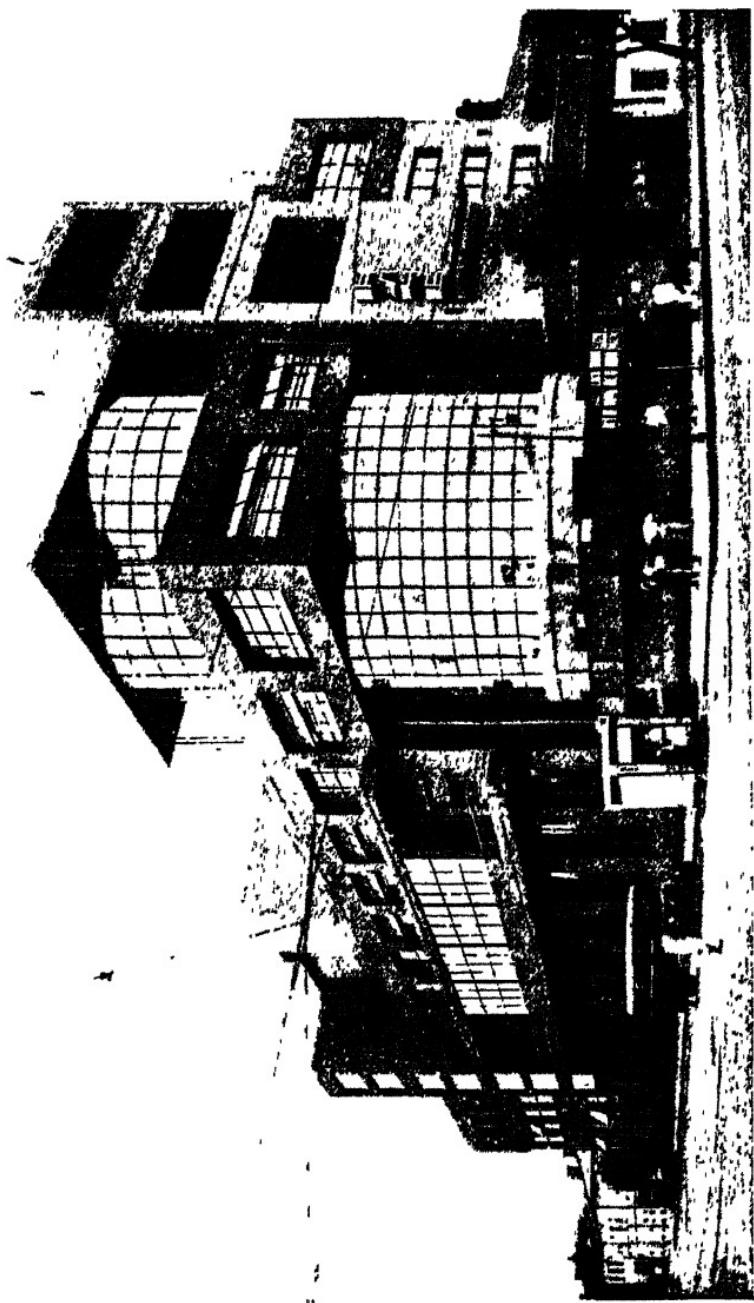
his eagle eye on the slacker and sending up the rate of piecework! All the same, in spite of his importance, he welcomed us in friendly fashion; his wife, I gathered, was also a person of considerable importance, holding an appointment as inspector. She, however, was absent at the moment of our call, but we made the acquaintance of twin daughters, aged ten. These were cheerful little maidens with beribboned hair, who gave proof of their instruction in orthodox politics by asking to what category I belonged in England and whether or no I were a member of the Communist Party?

They have a queer method of fixing rents in Russia; not by the room but by the floor-space. When I asked the official who did the honours of the building what rent the shock-brigade family gave for their flat, the answer was that they paid one rouble twenty kopecks per square metre per month. That left me in ignorance as to how it all worked out in terms of four rooms and an entrance passage, plus charges (not specified) for heating and lighting of the flat. One interesting piece of information I did obtain: the system of tenure in the community houses (which was what my guide called them) bears close resemblance to a system of private property. After a stated number of roubles and kopecks have been paid, the square metres of floor-space are owned by the tenant; who, if I understood the explanation aright, has acquired his flat by what we should call hire-purchase. Having completed his necessary series of payments, he not merely owns his dwelling, free of further rental, but it remains with his family at his death. And if that is not private property in housing, what is?

Rentals were being overhauled when I was in Moscow,

*F. R. Yerbury*

MOSSOW WORKERS' CLUB





and it was announced that in future the rent of a room was to be determined partly by its sanitary condition; the charge per square metre would differ in the same house if one room was damper than another!

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I arrived in Moscow in spring and in daylight; and my first impression of Moscow streets was that all these people must be hurrying to their work or leaving it and hurrying home. Always and everywhere they were walking straight ahead; like our morning crowds arriving from the suburbs, or our evening crowds when they make for their stations or their buses. They seldom lingered even for a moment, seldom looked to their right or their left.

And then, on a sudden, I had it—the reason for this straight, unlingering walk. These people did not turn to look right or left because there was so little to look at.

If you think of the principal streets in London or any other English town; if you think of the gait and behaviour of those who walk therein, you will realize that, apart from their own affairs, there are two main calls on their attention. The first of these calls is the traffic of the roadway, with its buses, its vans, and its many varieties of cars; we all look at it from time to time and young people look at it constantly. And the second and perhaps the more important is the long succession of shop windows. When one comes to think of it, every shop window is dressed and decorated with intent to hold up the passer-by, bring him to a stand-still and, if possible, entice him indoors: thus every shop window, effectively arranged, tends to slow down the human current on the pavement and draw gazers

aside from it into stationary lines and groups. If you are a Russian pedestrian, however, these calls on your attention will be absent. There are only trams to look at on the Moscow roadways, and on the sidewalk there are no shop windows.

That statement, I admit, is not literal fact; there are shops in Moscow, though the number, compared with towns of other nations, is meagre; and the windows of these shops are used for the display of wares. But when you have taken due note of the display, you understand why the passer-by does not often press his nose against the glass!

Near my hotel, in the centre of the city, was a street typical of many; when Nicholas the Second was ruler of Russia, it must have been a street given over to trade, since all its ground-floor windows consisted of sheets of plate-glass. Behind most of these windows at the present day hang curtains of a yellowish casement cloth; and whenever there was a chink between these curtains and I managed to peer in, the room beyond them was furnished as some sort of office. As for the establishments still continuing as shops, though their windows were not disguised with yellow curtains, there was a lack of variety about their wares that explained the public's lack of interest. This, as I have said, was a busy thoroughfare in central Moscow; and in the course of three or four hundred yards, these were the shops I found open:

(1) A combination of chemist's and optician's. Spectacles and magnifying glasses in one window, a small selection of chemist's bottles in the other.

(2) An establishment of distinctly scientific character, showing glass tubes and other laboratory vessels, a

skeleton and various diagrams descriptive of the human interior.

(3) A stationer's, very sparsely furnished. Its exhibits (much scattered to fill out the window-space) consisted of a small stock of drawing-pins, some bottles of ink, half a dozen pencil-cases, and what, in England, would be the cheapest of children's paint-boxes. There was also one packet of playing-cards on view, and one set of chessmen with board.

(4) Number four was a draper's emporium—also somewhat scantily provided. It suggested, in fact, a minor village shop that had run through most of its stock. In one window were two or three machine-made blouses, two or three men's shirts, two or three women's scarves, and pairs of stockings. There was also a supply—strictly limited—of pearl buttons and thread. That was one window of the drapery store; the contents of the other consisted of face-powder and bottles of scent.

One thing I realized soon after setting foot in Russia: an article of commerce that is everywhere plentiful is face-powder. There seems to be a shortage of every other useful commodity, from housing accommodation to brown paper and soap—but never a shortage of face-powder. What it is made of I do not know; I have always thought flour had something to do with it, but with long queues waiting outside the bread shops, it would seem unlikely that foodstuffs should go into its composition. But whatever its ingredients, they must be found, or produced or imported, in abundance. Wherever I stayed in the Soviet Union, from Lenin-grad in the north to Sebastopol in the south, there was always sufficiency of powder in the local shops. Though I did not see them so frequently displayed in shop

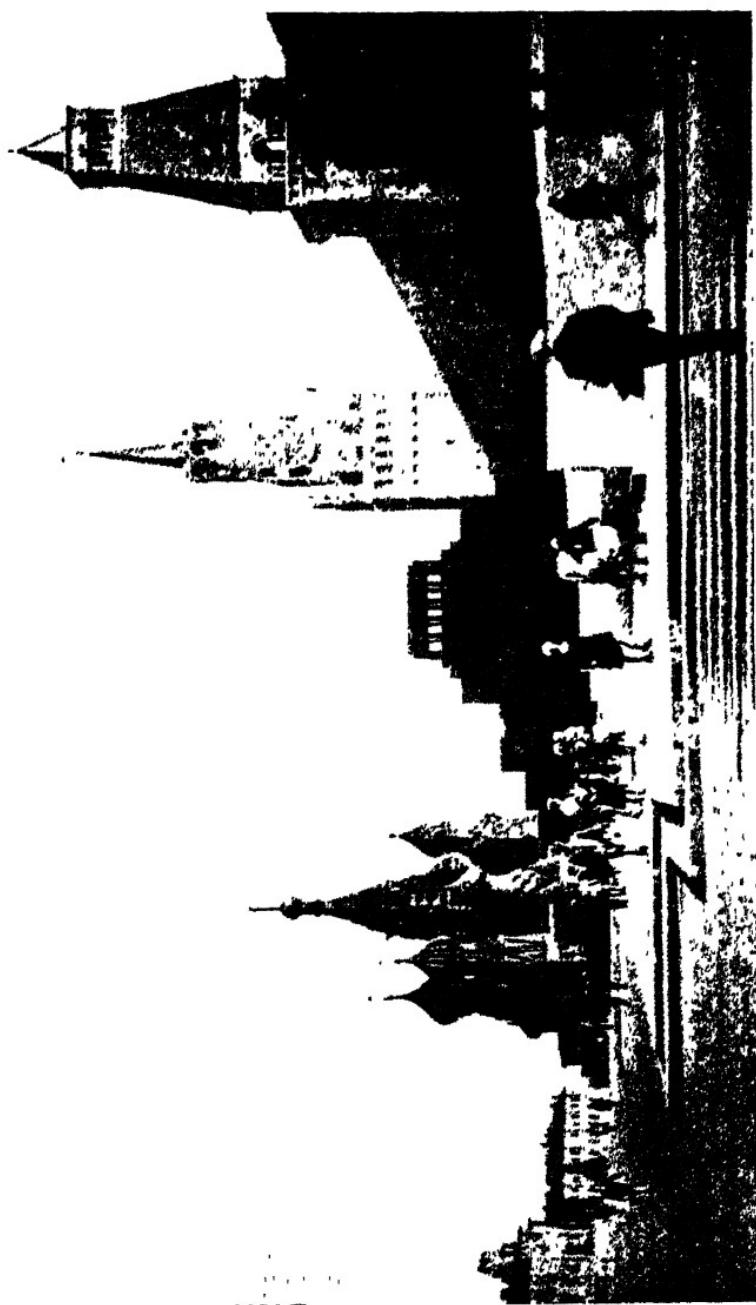
windows, there is also, I imagine, no shortage of lipsticks; at any rate they are in fairly general use.

To go back to my shopping thoroughfare in Moscow. On my return journey, on the other side of the road, I found another small stationer's, of much the same calibre as the first. Then, at short intervals, two little shops both of which cut stamps and stencils—one of them enhancing its window display by a portrait of Lenin adorned with trimmings of red paper. Followed a wine merchant with quite a lot of bottles in his window: sherry and vodka and other Russian products; and a window containing white 'undies', most of them edged with the cheapest of machine lace but one or two embroidered by hand.

And of course there was the bookshop abounding in revolutionary literature; no street in the Soviet Union is complete without that! The pamphlets of Stalin and the volumes of Lenin and Karl Marx; the posters exhorting to work and the class war—there was never a shortage of these. From Leningrad in the north to Sebastopol in the south, the Red bookshop is always to be found. To all appearances (I say this quite soberly) retail trade in Russia is largely concerned with revolutionary literature and face-powder.<sup>1</sup>

For my first two days in Moscow it rained almost without ceasing; a fact which caused me to notice that it was a city of no umbrellas. I think in those first two days of rain I only saw two persons possessed of

<sup>1</sup> It is common knowledge that the shop is of minor importance, in the Russian scheme of goods distribution; my point is merely the effect on public manners, and the appearance of the street, of this unimportance of the shop.



RED SQUARE, MOSCOW



them. I myself dislike the umbrella and never use it; but then I have a mackintosh against the weather, while in Moscow it is either not the thing to wear a mackintosh or else there is the usual shortage.

This lack of appliances to keep out the weather would anywhere add to the discomforts of life; it must add to them forcibly in a city such as Moscow where there are so few means of getting about. For in what so many believe to be the worker's paradise, the worker's means of transport are limited to trams—for which he may have to wait a good time when travelling from a distance to his work. I was told that an underground railway is coming some day, and when it comes it will relieve the congestion in the trams and make life easier for dwellers in the suburbs; but at present, like much else in the Soviet Union, it exists only in Plan!

Like all governments established by revolution, the Government of Soviet Russia has had to wrestle with difficulties from which established authority is immune; it has had to maintain itself by force of arms, to establish an untried system and bring order out of disorder. But, on the other hand, it has had an advantage denied to established forms of authority and which, further, no other revolutionary government has ever possessed to quite the same extent—the advantage given by confiscation of property. The hospitals and welfare institutions to which the new regime points with an often legitimate pride—there may be some which are housed in new buildings, but the vast majority have taken over the good bricks and mortar erected in the bad old times. With all the will in the world it is unlikely that Bolshevism would have been able to provide rest-houses and convalescent homes on the present scale, if

houses, convenient to the purpose, had not been scattered round the country by the former nobility and bourgeoisie. And in towns, the palaces and other appendages of royalty; the clubs and private houses of the former aristocracy—all these, at no cost beyond utterance of decree, stood ready for experiment and undertaking that elsewhere would need the delay of preparation. The Soviet regime has inherited as well as created.

In the quarter of Moscow where once dwelt aristocracy, aristocracy's houses yet stand; the remnant and outward shell of a life whereof Tolstoy wrote in his novels and which you may, if you will, reconstruct with the eye of your mind. (The house described in *War and Peace* as the home of the Rostovs is now a club for proletarian writers.) Here are the mansions standing back from the street and built round courtyards; the great houses set in trees and gardens where once dwelt a colony of family and servants; and which, like most Russian secular architecture, bear the stamp of the Western classic. With yellow-washed walls, like the houses of Italy, whence came so many of the architects of Tsarist Russia; reminiscent of Italy also in their porticoes and detail of ornament. Nowadays the yellow wash is smeared and faded and the old-style dignity overcast with shabbiness; while the old-time colony of family and servants has been succeeded by a yet more numerous proletarian colony which, even if it appreciates architectural beauty, has not the means of preserving it. Once, as we drove along a 'west-end' street, I saw a house with no symptoms of decay, or signs denoting an institution—a house with pleasant windows and standing in a well-kept garden. I asked my companion if she knew

anything about it; and it was foreign occupation, an embassy!

Moscow since the Revolution has more than doubled its size; hence, with all its legacies from the old regime, new building has been a necessity. About the new building there is nothing distinctively Russian; it is of the unadorned, sometimes cliff-like type with which Germany has long been familiar and which of late has been imported into England. On the south side of the river, placed convenient to a bridge, is one of the most imposing of these new buildings, for the housing of government employees; and nearly opposite is to rise an erection destined to be still more imposing—a Palace of the Soviets, overlooking the river from its northern bank (its Kremlin bank, so perhaps conceived as rival to the Kremlin)—and occupying the site of the Cathedral of Christ the Redeemer, one of many superfluous churches that have fallen to the pick of late years.

Of all the modern achievements in Moscow the tomb of Lenin is by far the most impressive; photographs have made it familiar the world over, but photographs do not convey the rightness of its colouring—the toning of its solemn red granite with the other and lighter red of the Kremlin wall. It has also a rightness of proportion and placing, and a purpose—it is more than a tomb. On ceremonial occasions—First of May and the like—it serves as a tribune whence Stalin and the other dignitaries of the Soviet Union review the march past of delegations and military forces. I had been told by more than one previous visitor to Moscow of the long train of worshippers stretching across the Red Square from the tomb and filing slowly past the glass coffin that contains the body of Lenin. While I was in

Moscow there was no such waiting crowd; a couple of soldiers on guard at the tomb—that was all. As to whether this interruption of the ceremony was only temporary, or whether it had ended for good and all, nobody I asked seemed to know. There was a suggestion—not from a Russian source—that the embalming process had not given permanent results; and another explanation—which also seems possible—that the powers that be of Bolshevik Russia do not entirely approve of a ritual that has points of resemblance with the old-time worship of relics.

All the same, it may be there was wisdom in exposing the body to the public gaze; if Lenin, like those of common clay, had been buried or cremated, there might have been a possibility of one of those survival legends which have so often given trouble to the Russian body politic. Russia is the country of survival legend and, in consequence, of personation; personation which has more than once assumed epidemic proportions. In the early seventeenth century there was the case—or rather, cases—of the false Dimitri who, appearing first in Poland, claimed to be a prince whom Boris Godounov, the usurping Tsar, was supposed to have got rid of by the customary method of murder. There is just a possibility that the first Dimitri was what he claimed to be—a younger son of Ivan the Terrible who had managed to escape the assassins of Godounov; but when his brief triumph was followed by overthrow and death, a second Dimitri was soon on the scene to head the revolt against his successor; while there also appeared another pretender, a false Peter, who claimed to be a grandson of Ivan. More, it is said that at one time in the ranks of the Don Cossacks there were five or six pseudo-

princes, resurrected descendants of the Terrible. And much the same thing happened in the following century, in the reign of Catherine II; her half-wit husband, Peter III, in the course of a reign that only ran to months, had relieved the Russian nobles of some of their heavier dues of service to the State, and the hope had arisen, among the peasant-serfs, that their lot was also to be lightened. It is unlikely that such an idea ever entered Peter's head; but before he had time to undeceive his hopeful subjects he was deposed by a wife more vigorous than himself and conveniently removed by her partisans, the Orlovs. Faith in his good intentions still persisted among the humble, so much so that when Emilyan Pougatchev raised the standard of revolt in the Volga region, he found it convenient to resurrect Peter in his own person—he was Peter escaped from his would-be murderers and rousing the country against his faithless wife and rebel subjects. The Pougatchev revolt put Catherine's throne in jeopardy; and even when its leader had been brought to Moscow, imprisoned in a cage, and put to death in full view of the multitude—even then the legend of the resurrected Tsar was not dead. And, like the false Dimitri, even while he lived Pougatchev-Peter had his imitators; at one time numerous brigand bands were headed by a Peter III. In the next century a legend of survival attached itself to Alexander I; he was not dead, he had retired in secret to a monastery. . . . Just as well, therefore, that the beatified Lenin has been seen by thousands and tens of thousands: who can certify, from their own experience, that he is well and truly dead!

It was a Russian, Schchusev, who built the Lenin mausoleum; but the Kremlin wall behind it was the

work of an Italian, and near by, in the Red Square, stands another monument built by an Italian, though not to an Italian pattern—*Vassili-Blagenny*, the Cathedral of St. Basil; built in the sixteenth century by order of Ivan the Terrible, to commemorate the taking of Kazan. The legend goes that the terrible Tsar was so proud of his strange, new church that he commanded the eyes of the architect to be put out, so that he could never make a copy of his masterpiece. ‘Every colour of the rainbow is displayed on the cluster of lofty tapering towers, while on the delicate summits are perched huge misshapen domes, likewise painted in bright gaudy colours, one covered as with a network of green upon a surface of yellow, another of dazzling red with broad white stripes, while the gilding of a third adds to the strange and motley appearance of the whole building.’ A description by a traveller of the last century which would not be entirely accurate if written to-day; for if the tomb of Lenin loses in a photograph, the Cathedral of St. Basil gains. The monotone of photograph does not make manifest the latter-day neglect of St. Basil; how the once gaudy colours—the greens and dazzling reds and broad white stripes—have lapsed into a general dinginess.

## XI. THE LAND OF SUSPICION

ON my way to Russia I broke the journey in Warsaw, where some Polish friends gave me several useful tips with regard to conditions of travel in the Soviet Union. One piece of information at the time I did not take seriously; I thought they were pulling my leg.

'If you ever travel on a river boat, you 'll find, when you come to a bridge, they 'll order you to go below.'

'Order me to go below? What for?'

'It 's always done. In case any of the passengers have bombs in their pockets and try to blow up the bridge.'

I repeat, I thought my leg was being pulled; the idea that the tale had fact in it never entered my head until I met a couple of American women who had done a stage of their tour on a river steamer and, much to their astonishment, been herded below whenever the boat neared a bridge. The rule is a strict one which must never be broken, however respectable the outward seeming of the passengers; my Americans told me that before they arrived at the end of their voyage it was late at night, the boat's local passengers had all, or nearly all, been landed, and they were the only people on deck. All the same, they were requested to go below when a bridge was neared; excuses were made and polite regrets; but not even for the most unsuspicious-looking tourist did the captain dare to break the rule.

I ran against suspicion on my first walk in Moscow—which had for its object nothing more than contemplation of the Kremlin. I thought I would walk round

„Ищут классового врага вне колхозов, ищут его в виде людей с зверской физиономией, с грязными зубами, с толстой шеей, с обрезом в руках. Ищут кулака, потому что им его лгают из плакатов.

НО ТАКИХ КУЛАКОВ ДАВНО УЖЕ НЕТ на поверхности.

Нынешние кулачи и подкулачники, нынешние антиколхозные элементы — это дарение — что большей частью люди „тихие“, „спокойные“, почти „сияющие“. Их не нужно искать далеко от колхоза, они сидят в самом колхозе и занимают там должности киздогашников, звездов, счетоводов, секретарей и т. д.

Они никогда не скажут „долой колхозы“. Они „за“ колхозы. Но они работают в колхозах „заря гадюжническую и вредительскую работу, что колхозам от них не поздоровится“.

И. СТАЛИН



AN ANTI-KOOLAK POSTER DISPLAYED BY THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT ON THE MOSCOW HOARDINGS (See p. 220)



its mile of wall, see it from every point of view; so I went down to the river and over the bridge, dawdling along the southern bank where you look across the Moskwa at the old magnificence of Tsardom. I dawdled along in the fashion of the sightseer; stopping often to wonder at the Kremlin with the sun on it; and wondering also—being new to Russia—at the mud and the ruts and the puddles in a Moscow road. Also I stopped now and then to look at the houses I was passing—and once at a large one that stood back from the road, a house with a formal carriage entrance. I had not noticed that there was a metal plate affixed to the wall beside the door, in token of official occupation; I had merely lingered to look up at a house which was of different style from most of its surroundings when a hand was laid on my shoulder—the hand of a Russian policeman. What his actual words were I do not know, but their purport was plain enough; the roughness of the tone combined with the push on my shoulder was a clear indication to 'Move on'. I moved.

That was not the only time I was given to understand, in the course of my stroll, that it is not permitted to linger in the neighbourhood of Russian public buildings. I continued my way along the southern bank, crossed the next bridge and went back to the Kremlin wall; then, following it round, I came to the gateway that stands in the north-west angle. This, in my opinion, was a gateway worth looking at, so I came to a halt on the pathway and looked; when instantly the moving-on process was repeated—the hand on my shoulder, the peremptory voice of the policeman. So again I moved on—this time in even more astonishment. If a visitor to Moscow may not look at the Kremlin,

what may that visitor look at? And my interest had had nothing furtive about it; I had seen the policeman on guard near the gate and, my conscience being perfectly clear of offence, I had stopped close beside him without the slightest apprehension. More, I was standing some distance from the actual gate, which is reached by a causeway over what has been a moat—and yet I was an object of suspicion.

I may mention here, for those not aware of the fact, that a policeman in the Soviet Union is not called a policeman, and a soldier is not called a soldier. The delusion that by changing the name you change the thing itself is not confined to Russia—did we not recently rechristen our workhouses, institutions?—but in Russia apparently the delusion is more than common strong. The minions of the Tsar were known as policemen; so, from dislike of the Tsar and all things Tsarist, the gentleman who pushes you when you look at the Kremlin is nowadays called a militiaman. The defenders of Russia in the days of the Tsar were called soldiers; so, from dislike of the Tsar and all things Tsarist, they are now called Red Guards or Red Army men. Personally I cannot see that it makes much difference; if a Red Guard fires off a siege gun or sticks you with a bayonet, the result will be the same as if the feat were performed by a soldier. I suggested that gently to one of my guides but she seemed to think the name most important.

In an English museum the public are required to leave their sticks and umbrellas at the entrance; I suppose, to remove the possibility of damaging the exhibits by pointing. In Russia they are suspicious of more than the stick and umbrella—handbags and garments are suspect. I do not know whether they take away

your overcoat in all Russian museums, but I know they do in some—for instance, the Revolutionary Museum in Moscow, where I first made acquaintance with the custom. I parted from my garment with reluctance because the day was chilly and the museum, as we entered, did not strike me as particularly warm; but I suppose long coats have possibilities of concealment for bombs and daggers—anyway, they took mine away from me and (with my guide's handbag) it remained in custody until we came back to the door.

I found the Revolutionary Museum interesting, less, perhaps, as regards its later rooms, concerned with the doings of 1917, than its earlier, which dealt with the attempted revolutions of bygone days—such as the Cossack revolt under Stenka Razin, in the seventeenth century, and the later rebellion headed by Emilyan Pougatchev. The abortive Decembrist conspiracy of 1825 also figures largely on the walls of the museum; it was no more than a flash in the revolutionary pan, but, all the same, it has its special interest, as an expression of liberalism grown active in a class which is proverbially a stronghold of conservatism. The leading Decembrists belonged to the military caste<sup>1</sup> and sought to gain their ends with the aid of military backing; their aim was to limit the power of the Tsar and substitute constitutional for autocratic monarchy. The attempt was a complete failure and Nicholas I, whose prerogative they had assailed, punished some hundred and twenty of the conspirators with imprisonment and exile and put five of the ringleaders to death. The

<sup>1</sup> The spread of liberal ideas in the Russian army is usually accounted for by its contact with western Europe through the Napoleonic Wars.

reputation of Nicholas is by no means merciful; but I found myself wondering, as I surveyed the pictured history of the hapless Decembrists, whether the dictatorship of the proletariat, if it discovered a conspiracy afoot in its army, would limit its death sentences to five? . . . One of the exhibits was a sketch, in colour, representing an exiled Decembrist dreaming in Siberia of his former life—as a good many exiled ‘counter-revolutionaries’ no doubt are dreaming to-day.

In the modern section of the museum many of the exhibits were documents in unreadable Russian and therefore did not detain me; one of them, however, did detain, and interest me, and that not only because it was writ in a language I could understand. It was a paper signed in London and dating from pre-war days—I forget the exact year but I think it was about 1909; the signatories were representatives of a ‘red’ international conference, held in London, and among its members was Lenin. Even when conducted on modest lines, international conferences cannot be run without money; there are the fares of the delegates, their lodgings and expenses, there is rent of a hall, there is printing and light; and the money in this case would not have been forthcoming if it had not been for a friendly capitalist. Joseph Fels, manufacturer of Fels-Naphtha soap, advanced the £1,700 which made it possible to hold the London meeting, and advanced it, moreover, without any security but the signatures of Lenin and his impecunious ‘comrades’. . . . That is the exhibit on the wall of the Moscow Revolutionary Museum; an acknowledgment of the loan and appreciation of the generosity of its terms. ‘That paper,’ said my guide proudly, ‘is very interesting, because the money those

people gave a receipt for is the only debt from Tsarist times that we have ever repaid to a capitalist country.' . . . The remark brought home to me the fundamental difficulty of trading agreements with Russia!

After the Revolution, when the impecunious 'comrades' had attained to power, the £1,700 was paid in full—and the receipt returned to its signatories. For me the document had another and private source of interest; in pre-war days I had known Joseph Fels—the kindly little man who always had his hand in his pocket for somebody's benefit. Joseph Fels, the single-taxer, who ran a labour colony off his own bat and started allotments in the waste grounds of London; and who (we may take it for granted) foresaw the future as little as any of us when he put his hand in his pocket for a conference of needy revolutionaries. I could see I went up in my guide's estimation when I told her I used to know the benefactor of Lenin, and had more than once stayed in his house!

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Persecution mania is a recognized complaint in individuals, and if it is not a recognized complaint in communities, it ought to be; stock-in-trade of every political party is the nefarious scheming of those who do not belong to it, and the habit of evil-thinking, like all other habits, grows stronger with indulgence. Persecution mania is the cause of many wars, and one of its products is the cult of the martyr—which provides an excuse for avenging martyrdom and is usually a symptom of mass sadism. Russia is afflicted, and badly afflicted, with the mania; once, on a journey, for lack of reading matter of my own, I began to spell out the headlines

on the Russian newspaper of my ‘opposite number’ in the carriage; and the most prominent of the headlines, the first I deciphered, was ‘Wreckers try New Methods’. And the suggestion of wreckers and their methods is everywhere; in plays and in posters, in newspapers and talk—and the sentries posted by the dozen along the great dam at Dnieprostroi.

I once asked an Englishman who knew something of Russia from a business point of view if he thought there was any real ground for this constant suspicion of sabotage? His reply was, yes, that there was sabotage, though not to the extent imagined by the persecution maniac. Where there is unwilling labour, he said—and there is plenty of unwilling labour in Russia—you are bound to get something of the kind. When he has no legitimate means of letting off the steam of his annoyance, a malcontent is likely to vent it in petty acts of damage to machinery, etc. Much of what is denounced as sabotage on the land may mean no more than the attempts of hungry peasants to secrete a larger ration than their taskmaster would permit them to retain; and much of what is put down as sabotage in factories should be ascribed to lack of skill and experience. But all the same, there is a percentage of injury inflicted with intent, and will be till conditions improve. What might be called impulsive injury, rather than deliberate; arising from sense of grievance and not from deep-laid plot.

It is common knowledge that the fear of being suspected of counter-revolutionary friendships, treasonable intercourse, or similar offences keeps Russians and foreigners apart; the visitor to the country finds it hard

to make acquaintance outside the circle of official employees to whose care he is entrusted. That I had been told before I went to Russia; but I had not realized that a small act of courtesy from foreigner to Russian might be dangerous to the recipient. It so happened that, on one of my journeys, I ran against a Russian who spoke English—a rare bird nowadays, save among the well-trained guides. We made each other's acquaintance by sheer chance and I was glad to find someone I could talk to comfortably; his English was excellent because (it was plain) he belonged to the class and the generation that was instructed in foreign languages—the generation that is passing away and the class that no longer exists. Though, when I asked him how he got his good English, he only said that he had learned it as a boy and had later visited London, his *bourgeois* origin was unmistakable. As he mentioned regretfully that he could never get English books nowadays, I asked him if he would allow me to send him one. Clearly the suggestion appealed to him, and he offered—pathetically—to pay for the book; I noticed he hesitated a little on the offer, I imagine because he had no idea of what it would cost him in terms of the foreign exchange. . . . I begged him to look upon it as a small return for services rendered—he had interpreted for me in a language difficulty—and asked for his name and address; he wrote it in my pocket-book and then turned to a companion—would there be any objection to his receiving a book from abroad? The friend thought not; in fact he knew of someone who had received an illustrated paper from abroad; accordingly I promised a volume in due time, when I got back to London.

In view, however, of what I myself had observed of the prevalence of suspicion, I thought it better to make further inquiry before sending off the book to his address. I put the question to two of my countrymen, who had both, of late years, had experience of Russia, and neither of whom was the kind of man to allow prejudice to blind him to fact. They both advised against sending the book, as a possible danger to the recipient. Certainly I must not send it in my own name—a parcel posted to Russia must have name of the sender attached. If this were noted—and if I wrote anything that did not meet with Soviet approval . . . I suggested someone else to post the parcel. But they still thought better not—in the case of a *bourgeois* such as I described, all intercourse with foreigners would be suspect.

The pro-Russian enthusiast will doubtless assert this is nonsense—and with all my soul I hope it is! But persecution mania is an evil state of mind—and for the sake of the poor old *bourgeois* I preferred not to run any risks.

## XII. GOVERNMENT

'THE Union of Soviet Socialist Republics'—so I learn from a publication issued in Moscow, in the English tongue—'the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a state under the dictatorship of the Proletariat.' Here let me admit that the phrase 'dictatorship of the Proletariat' has always puzzled me—still does. I had always thought that the essence of dictatorship was concentrated power; how then can dictatorship be spread out thin over a whole proletariat? Nor is the position rendered much clearer by a statement to the effect that dictatorship of the Proletariat is only a temporary expedient; the Russian of to-day is living in 'a transition period from the capitalist order to a Communist society'. . . . Permanent or transitional, a proletarian dictatorship seems a contradiction in terms.

'The Proletariat of the U.S.S.R.', my publication continues, 'exercises its power in alliance with the poor and medium strata of the peasantry—that is, the labouring peasants who do not exploit the labour of others—and looks for main support to the collective farmers, poor peasants, and land labourers of the country. In this way the power is wielded in the interests of the vast and overwhelming majority of the labouring masses. All persons who have ever lived in the past, or are now living, on unearned income—that is, who have ever exploited or now exploit the labour of others, especially former landowners, proprietors of industrial enterprises

and the like—or persons deriving their income now or previously from trade or from invested capital, the clergy and monks of all religious sects as well as officials and civil service employees of the old regime, are prohibited from taking any part whatever in the government. As in every other state, this section of the population is an insignificant minority, so that the number of disfranchised persons in the Soviet Union is actually somewhat less than nine per cent of the total adult population.'

Here be it noted that if the Soviet powers adhere strictly to their rule about invested capital, a much larger proportion than nine per cent of the adult population must be 'prohibited from taking any part whatever in the government'. When I was in Russia the adult population was being urged and stimulated to turn its proletarian wages into interest-bearing capital<sup>1</sup>; in other words, to invest in the loan for the Second Five Year Plan. It is clearly an error to call the Russian system Communism; there is a Communist Party which is working to bring it about, but not yet a Communist State. The present system is, I believe, most accurately described as State Capitalism—the means of production and distribution merged in a gigantic trust.

'The basis of social classes,' my informant proceeds, 'the cause for the division of society into such classes, is the private ownership of the means of production. For this reason the main pillar of the Soviet Constitution is the abolition of such ownership. Private property in land, forests, waters, and the wealth hidden in the bowels of the earth, and in rail and water transport, was abolished in 1918.' While later in the same year 'the

<sup>1</sup> And even the non-adult—see page 13.

means of industrial production were also nationalized—the mines and pits, the factories and industrial plants'.

As to the method, the mechanism of the system of government:

'The basic and primary nuclei of the governmental power are the Councils, or Soviets, of Workers, Peasants, and Red Army Soldiers' Deputies. These Soviets are elected in all cities, urban and factory districts, and rural areas'; and they 'constitute the supreme authority in the area over which they hold jurisdiction, and are also responsible for executing all orders and instructions issued to them by their superior organs. Their activities are not limited to local matters; they may also discuss questions relating to the State as a whole . . . and submit proposals and suggestions to the appropriate higher authority. Every Soviet is headed by a *presidium*, or executive committee, which conducts the routine activities of the Soviet and is answerable therefor to the general meeting or *plenum*'. As for the franchise: unless they are mentally deranged or have been by law disqualified, 'all persons over eighteen who work enjoy the franchise, irrespective of sex, race, nationality, or religion'. An elected member of the Soviet is accountable to his constituents and not only at election times; 'should he fail to obey their mandate they may recall him and elect another deputy in his stead'. He can also be turned off by the council of which he is an elected member, should he show himself negligent in discharge of his duties; the said duties—attendance at meetings and the like—having to be performed in after-work hours. It should be noted that the Soviet deputy is expected, despite the calls upon his time, to continue in the exercise of his usual trade or calling.

So much for the local Soviets which, in theory at least, are linked up with the supreme authority by a system of elected congresses. 'The local Soviets elect the Congresses of Soviets which are the supreme organs . . . in territories of greater area than that of the local Soviets. The district Congresses, like the local Soviets, elect their own executive committees; then come the regional Congresses for still wider areas . . . higher still the Congresses of Soviets of the Republics . . . and finally the Congress of Soviets of the entire U.S.S.R. with its Central Executive Committee.' This final Congress 'constitutes the supreme organ of the Soviet Union, representing in all its fullness every aspect of legislative, administrative, and judicial power'. Actually the functions of this supreme Congress are confined to the election of the Central Executive Committee which 'in the intervals between the Congresses' is 'the highest body in the country'. As the Congress meets but once a year, its supreme authority is usually in the interval state of delegation.

Nor is this the end of the complications. The Central Executive Committee to which the supreme Congress gives birth, and to which it then delegates its authority, is a twofold body; consisting in the first place of a Council of Nationalities composed of five representatives from each of the Federated Republics of the U.S.S.R.; and in the second place of a Council of the Union. This also consists of representatives from the Federated Republics, but in varying numbers—the larger republics being entitled to more members than the smaller. The membership of these two bodies composing the Central Executive Committee runs, I believe, into hundreds; but it, also, is usually in a state of suspended animation,

as it only meets three times a year and in the interval delegates its powers to a committee of twenty-seven members. And this, for the greater part of the year, is the supreme authority of the State. Nominally, at least; if the authority of the Communist Party be left out of account.

That is a large 'If'. The omission to reckon with the Communist Party would be on a par with a performance of *Hamlet sans Prince*. Stalin, to the outside world, stands for Russia; and judging by the importance attached to his orations and the frequent display of his counterfeit presentment, in Russia itself he typifies the power of government. And Stalin is not President of the Soviet Union; that dignitary, when I was in Russia, was a gentleman called Kalinin, with whose features I was quite unfamiliar. Stalin is the Secretary of the Communist Party, and the Communist Party is the tail that wags the dog. The Soviet - Congress - Delegate-Authority-Dog!

Communism, like Fascism and Trade Unionism, sees in representative government—orthodox democracy—an instrument to advance its own ends and interests. If democracy opposes those ends, or is too slow in its method of advancing them, then, in the eyes of Fascism, Trade Unionism, Communism, its existence is no longer justified. Wherever such movements have gained ground and inspired a popular faith they have created, side by side with existing institutions, an irresponsible, independent form of authority which has taken over, or sought to take over, the powers of political democracy. The British movement towards sectional authority received a check at the time of the general strike; and although it appears to be reviving nowadays, it is less

likely than of yore to take the form of Trade Unionism. In Russia, however, in Italy and Germany, a section—a party—has established itself in supremacy; taking possession of the political life of the nation, sweeping other parties out of existence and making opposition a crime.

Russian Communism has succeeded where Trade Unionism failed because, like Fascism, it is a highly disciplined body; and because, like Fascism, it has faith in its mission of betterment. Where it has the pull over Socialism of the European variety is in the doctrine of duty that it also shares with Fascism. That is a doctrine which produces good servants of the State; servants ready and eager to endure hardship and make sacrifice, so the honour and well-being of the State be advanced. It is in that and not in its tyranny that the real strength of Leninism lies; a strength that is absent from our British breed of Socialism which, so far, seems purely acquisitive; at any rate it seldom or never couples the idea of the citizen's rights with his duties, and refuses to face the uncomfortable fact that the Socialist State cannot hope to endure unless its citizens put into the common stock at least as much as they take out. If there are British Socialists who realize that fact, they are not in the habit of impressing it upon their followers as Communists and Fascists impress it upon their disciples.

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In the U.S.S.R. there are several federated republics. The Russian, White Russian, Ukrainian, and Transcaucasian are the four original republic members by whose alliance the Soviet Union was created, and later

there was added an Asiatic group. According to the constitution of the U.S.S.R., every republic has the right of free withdrawal from the Union, but in all probability this theoretical right would be difficult to put into practice. Nor is the difficulty likely to grow less in the future, if industry develops according to plan and the different sections of the Union become more closely linked by improved communication. Take the case of the Ukraine which, by reason of its Black Earth Belt, is one of the granaries of the world. Constitution or no constitution, a country whose most urgent need is bread is not going to be cut off from its main supply without protest. Also, through the territory of the Ukraine flows the Dnieper, whose waters are now harnessed by the mighty dam which is the pride and boast of all the Russias. A vast power station has been erected and is in process of development; what was once a purely agricultural district, supporting a few villages on the banks of the Dnieper, is being transformed into an industrial region of the first importance to Russia. If the people of the Ukraine took it into their heads that they would prefer to secede from the Union and live independently, is it likely that the ruling powers in Moscow would accept a resignation that involved loss of control over the Ukraine granary, and loss of the Dnieper dam? The dam is a creation of the Union, not the Ukraine, and capital of the Union has been sunk in it. Then secession from the Union, on the part of any republic, would need to be preceded by agitation, and in a country which does not permit the existence of any organized opposition to the Government, agitation seems an impossibility. If any group or movement in favour of secession did venture on activity, it



STALIN



would at once bring upon itself the whole force of the Communist Party.<sup>1</sup>

So long as the central authority at Moscow is in a position to suppress any agitation against the Union, the right of withdrawal must be considered illusory, a phrase in a paper constitution; but the clause which permits entry into the Union of all Socialist Soviet Republics is no illusion and has been several times put into operation. The clause was framed by those who believed in the speedy coming of a world-wide revolution; it therefore lays down that entry is open to any such republic, wherever in the world it may come into existence.

As to the extent of local autonomy enjoyed by the various republics in the Union, that—if one may believe official information—is wide. By Article III of the Constitution it is provided that the sovereignty of these republics shall be limited only to the extent specified by the Constitution, and only with reference to matters falling within the competence of the Union. Outside these limits, each republic exercises its power as a state independently, and the Union itself safeguards the sovereign rights of the Federated Republics. Which sounds imposing until you realize that the sovereign rights thus safeguarded are not of the first importance. As one would expect, the Central Government has complete control over foreign policy, the defences of the country, and questions affecting war and peace; but it has control over a good deal more than that. It directs both the foreign and internal trade of its federated members, it controls the postal services and transport, the fundamentals of labour laws and legal procedure in

<sup>1</sup> See Note C at end of volume.

general. It controls the general principles of popular education and of laws affecting migration from one republic to another; it is supreme in matters of taxation and revenue and is entitled to plan for the economy of the whole Union. This system of union is not a federation as we usually employ the term; the state rights are few and authority is centralized at Moscow. An instance of this extreme of centralization came under my notice in the Ukraine, in the new industrial town that is growing up beside the dam across the Dnieper; there, in order that the level of work shall be high, prohibition has been enforced—it is illegal to sell drink in Dnieprostroi. I asked what was the authority that had imposed prohibition, thinking it was a question of local option and that the reply would be, the Dnieprostroi Soviet; to my surprise, however, I was told that the decree emanated from Moscow. A decree emanating from Moscow has such an awe-inspiring sound that I confess to a shock of astonishment when, later in the day, I came across a proof that the Soviet Union, like the United States of America, could not always enforce its drink laws—a double proof: two gentlemen who had much exceeded. One of them (after the frequent fashion of the Russian drunk) was completely sodden, a log; on his way home he had fallen into one of those grooves or trenches which occur on the outskirts of new towns, where building is in progress; and having fallen there, he lay and slept in peace—until the arrival of the other gentleman who had taken more than was good for him. The latter, staggering on his homeward way, in his turn reached the trench where his colleague lay prone—and proceeded to fall on the top of him. I left them reposing in their common ditch;

I suppose I ought to have been disgusted by the spectacle, but I wasn't. On the contrary, there was something rather pleasant in the thought that a decree from all-powerful Moscow could be so thoroughly and sottishly defied.

The Communist Party in the U.S.S.R. might object to hearing itself described as a ruling class, a new aristocracy, but to all intents and purposes that is what it is. As to the numbers of the new aristocracy, they are variously estimated; I have been told, on what seemed good authority, that they are round about a million; I have been told they were considerably more and have also been told they were less. At some of the factories and workshops you get local figures; at a bread factory I was shown over in Moscow, the total number of employees was 670, and of these 250 belonged to the Communist Party. The secretary of the factory Communists, who showed us round, said this was a high proportion; but I should imagine that the proportion in these 'show' factories is higher than elsewhere, as 'right-thinking' workers, of Communist persuasion, are likely to get better jobs than their lukewarm comrades. The party, while I was in Russia, was said to be undergoing a purge—a process that seems to be required now and then by all the 'dictatorship' classes. From time to time the Nazis comb out their supporters, and when I was in Italy, a year or two ago, I heard from a Fascist official that the party had been drastically overhauled and purified, and its membership considerably reduced.

The Russian Communist Party is by no means a democratic institution; in actual fact it is less democratic in its methods than Italian Fascism. Fascism would not

exclude recruits from any particular class, whereas certain sections of the Soviet community—private traders or others with the *bourgeois* taint—would be automatically excluded from Communist membership. If the Communist Party were democratic, it would not be so efficient as it is, so apt an instrument for the seizing and holding of power. In practically every respect its principles are the opposite of those which actuate believers in democracy. The root idea behind political democracy is the general virtue and intelligence of all classes and sections of the nation; only by belief in such virtue and intelligence can universal suffrage be justified. Whatever the ultimate aims and abstract principles of Communism, the concrete action of the Communist Party denotes disbelief in the doctrine of equal value; on the contrary, its members are not only trained but selected. Before they are admitted into the ruling class they go through a period of strict probation; a condition of being received as recruit is proof of capacity for service. As with many other ruling classes, the outlook of this one is military; its discipline, phraseology, and habit of mind—all these are moulded on the army pattern. Education, agriculture, industry are represented as ‘fronts’ upon which attacks are to be launched. It is because Communism, the combative body, is in control of the administrative machine and the thought of the country that military terms and phrases are so general in the Russia of to-day. ‘The newspapers are like war communiqués’—a very limited knowledge of the language will bear witness to the truth of that statement. ‘Every economic and intellectual happening becomes a “campaign” on a “front”. “Armies” “fight” “battles”, “brigades” “storm” “defiles”, “iron battalions” take “front-line trenches”

under "drum-fire". "Cadres" are formed, "deserters" held up to public scorn, "manœuvres" carried through; the "staffs" proclaim a "stand-to", "mobilize" "volunteers" into "light cavalry" and order "attacks" on commanding heights.<sup>1</sup> . . . The Communist Party, in short, is continually playing at soldiers.

As Russia comes back into the comity of nations—and the march of world events is bringing her back—she will eventually have to modify the present arrangement whereby the government that makes treaties and signs agreements is under the control of an outside authority. The Communist Party, which has no place in the paper constitution of the Soviet Union; which therefore is no party to negotiation, and can disregard the provisions of treaties and agreements.

It may be that the Russian governmental system will undergo change before long; judging by some of his orations, Stalin has no particular respect for the Soviets—with their complicated issue of congress and *plenum* and *presidium*. In a speech dealing with the failures of the collective farm policy which he made in January 1933, he spoke of the Soviet organization as 'a weapon, only a weapon. This weapon, in certain circumstances, can be turned against the Revolution. It can also be turned against the Counter-Revolution. It can be of service to the peasants and the working class. It can also, in certain circumstances, be of service to those who are enemies of the working class and peasants. All depends on the hands in which the weapon is placed and the direction in which it is turned. That fact our

enemies are beginning to grasp, but unfortunately there are many in the Communist Party who have not yet grasped it'.

If Stalin spoke his mind on this occasion, it is clear that the all-powerful leader of the Communist Party has no particular respect for the 'basic and primary nuclei of the governmental power'—the Soviets elected by workers, peasants, and soldiers which 'constitute the supreme authority in the area over which they hold jurisdiction'. In the eyes of Comrade Stalin, these basic and primary bodies have no value in themselves; they are of value only when their authority is not supreme, when it is wholly dominated by the authority of the Communist Party. The local Soviet is not there to represent the needs and opinions of workers, peasants, and soldiers, but to carry out the Stalin policy.

If the Communist Party and its secretary look upon the Soviet organization as a weapon only, not a safeguard of rights, and if the weapon is not sufficiently trenchant, then the party and its secretary may possibly discard that weapon in the future and forge something better suited to their needs.

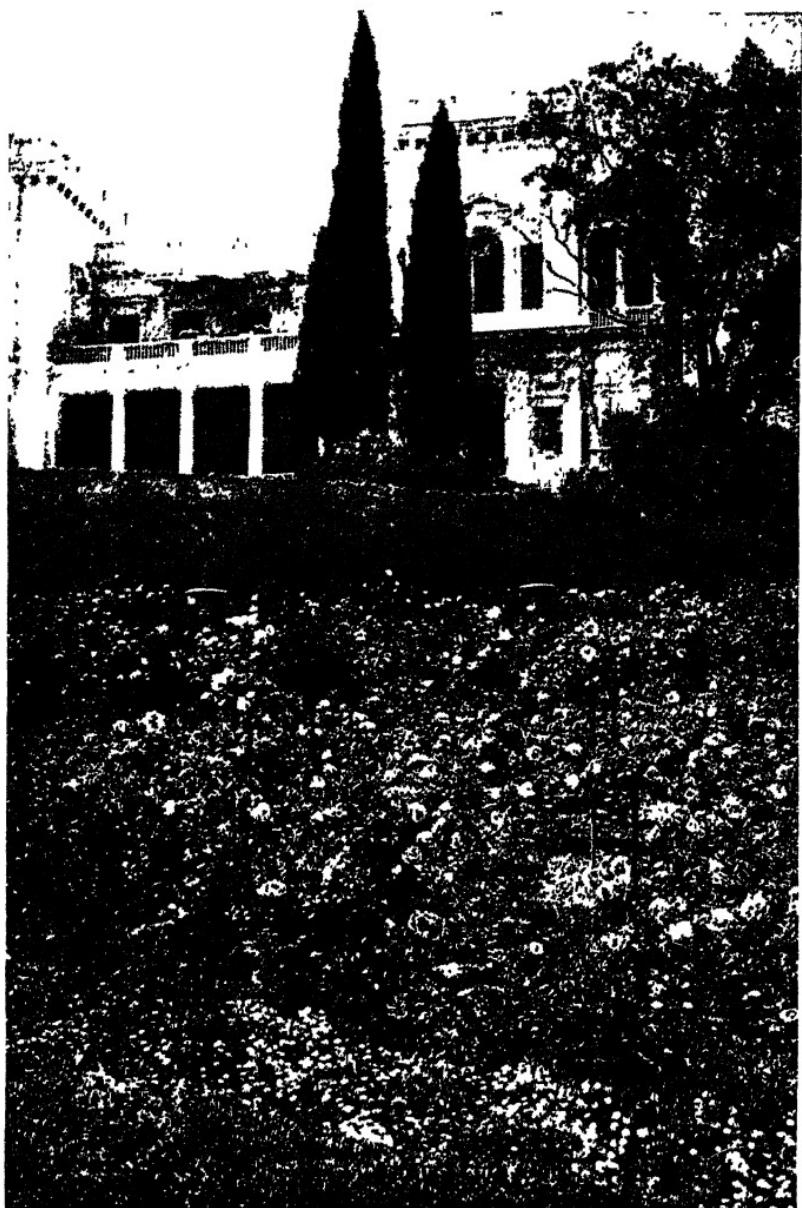
### XIII. A RIVIERA OF THE PAST

IN that prehistoric age which is twenty years ago, the Crimean coast—the south-eastern stretch of it—was a Russian counterpart of the Riviera. A more select and less cosmopolitan Riviera; the holiday ground of Russian royalty and aristocracy, not of all the world and his wife. The towns and villas strung along the Mediterranean are lacking on the Black Sea Riviera, where the only town of any note is Yalta. Till the coming of the car it must have been a region difficult of access—by the ordinary traveller best reached from the sea by way of Odessa and Sebastopol; and even to-day it is a three-hours' run from Sebastopol, the railway terminus, to the once-imperial villa of Livadia, on the outskirts of Yalta. It is probable, however, that the Tsar of all the Russias, when he journeyed to Livadia, made the run at a speedier pace, since we may take it for granted that the road in his day was kept in somewhat better repair. Portions were under repair when I was driven along it, but there were other portions, extensive portions, whose like I have seen only on roads that had been subject to shell-fire; and on them the driver dodged from side to side, avoiding the potholes and the ponds.

Grievous as are its deficiencies of surface, that road from Sebastopol to Yalta is one to drive and to remember. Climbing out of Sebastopol you pass Balaclava and its battlefield, with a glimpse of the sea on your right; a bare landscape till Sebastopol is left well behind, then

growing in grace with every mile. A green country and a prosperous; it was good, after the Ukraine, to see cattle whose ribs did not stick out. A winding road into a valley where the driver points out a *kolkhoz*; then up to seventeen hundred feet, through an archway set at the crown of the road, to one of the views of the world! The sea, hitherto invisible save for that glimpse at Balaclava, now suddenly, amazingly visible lying at the mountains' feet. After that, for twenty or thirty miles, a 'Corniche' road; now down almost to sea-level, now up again; always beautiful and sometimes, to the nervous, alarming—on one hairpin bend there was a gap in the wall, not yet repaired, that plainly stood for accident. A greener Riviera, this, than its Western prototype; the cypress grows at sea-level but, on the whole, its leafage is the leafage of Devonshire rather than Provence.

With its stretches of beauty and stretches of bump, the road from Sebastopol to Yalta is a symbol of the region it serves. Magnificence not so well cared for as it should be. . . . Livadia, the white Italian villa that was built for the holiday pleasure of an emperor, may be better employed in its present capacity as a rest-house for 'collective' peasants; but though it may be better, more usefully employed, like the road from Sebastopol it is shabbier. When it first comes into sight, at a turn in the drive, you may think it unaltered by its drastic change of mastership; drawn nearer, the shabbiness reveals itself in traces of neglect and rough handling. There is a broken pane in a first-floor window that the minions of Nicholas would certainly have hurried to replace; and a glance at the flower-beds is evidence enough that they have not been tended by gardeners in imperial pay. It may be that the present holders of



LIVADIA

The late Tsar's residence in the Crimea



the purse-strings grudge money spent upon plants that are merely ornamental; or it may be that proletarian gardeners have a natural preference for ordinary, proletarian flowers. Whatever the cause, the Livadia flower-beds run to plants that look after themselves: blue masses of forget-me-not that spread without assistance, and pink masses of one of the hedgerow geraniums, here promoted to garden dignity. Opposite page 144 is a photograph of part of the Livadia garden which was probably taken a few years ago, as it shows a grass plat that was evidently kept in good order. That same grass plat, when I saw it, grew as it pleased—not a lawn, but a field of young hay!

What still exists in its old magnificence is wistaria, drooping in lavender clusters from the walls of the terrace and the house: wistaria whose like I have never seen elsewhere. And there are also roses, a profusion of roses, though, the year being cold and the season late, they were not at their best when I saw them. These too are a heritage from the days of Romanov; Nicholas II, I was told, had a veritable passion for his roses. When power had been reft from him and he had fallen to the state of plain Nicholas Romanov, he asked to be allowed to retire to Livadia, saying—so the story goes—that he would be content to live there with his rose-garden. Had his request been granted by the Kerensky Government, he might well be alive to-day; those members of the imperial family who were permitted to go south, to the coast of the Crimea, were able, later on, to take refuge abroad from the increasing fury of Bolshevism.

The ex-imperial villa does not stand alone in its grounds; it is neighboured not only by the necessary

outbuildings and quarters for a guard, but by a whole terrace of grey stone houses, sufficiently imposing to warrant the title of mansions. Here, when Nicholas came to his summer quarters, lodged the court officials whose duty it was to attend on Imperial Majesty; and, between these mansions for high official use, the garages and cookhouse and quarters of the guard, and the dwelling of Imperial Majesty itself—between them all one is not surprised to hear that seventeen hundred proletarian guests can, at one and the same time, be entertained within the walls of Livadia. A couple of these guests, a man and a woman, arrived within its gates at the same moment as myself; both were heavily laden with baggage for their stay—the man with a bundle of rolled-up mattress, the woman with a well-stuffed basket. Yes, I was told, in answer to my query, the peasants who are privileged to stay at Livadia are expected to bring their own bedding; for its disposal they are allotted so many metres of floor space—the regulation amount.

On the authority of a guide-book issued by the Soviet authorities, I had expected to be allowed inside the ex-imperial villa; according to the said guide-book, access was permitted to certain rooms 'reserved as a museum', and to some of the private apartments of the Tsar and Tsarina. The furniture and ornament of these rooms, it was stated, bore witness to their owners' lack of taste; but on this point I had no means of judging, as entry was no longer permitted. Apparently the demand for accommodation has been so great that the private rooms and museum have also been turned over to proletarian guests; the empress's bedroom is staked out into lots amongst women, the emperor's bedroom amongst men.

One room on the ground floor I was allowed to enter; it is used as a reading-room, furnished as such in dull, ordinary fashion, and about a dozen of the inmates of Livadia were sitting there with magazines and newspapers.

Livadia is not the only dwelling on the Crimean Riviera which, seen too closely, loses something of its charm and dignity; the gay seaside villa converted to a rest-home, the ex-lordly pleasure-house turned sanatorium—they always look better from a distance. For one thing, the roofs often spoil them; as in other Southern countries, these are flat and, by exception, are still covered with the reddish pantiles that must once have been general; but the roofs of new houses and old ones repaired are now made of corrugated iron, painted red. Satisfactory, perhaps, to the modern-minded Russian, taking pleasure in all that is machine-made.

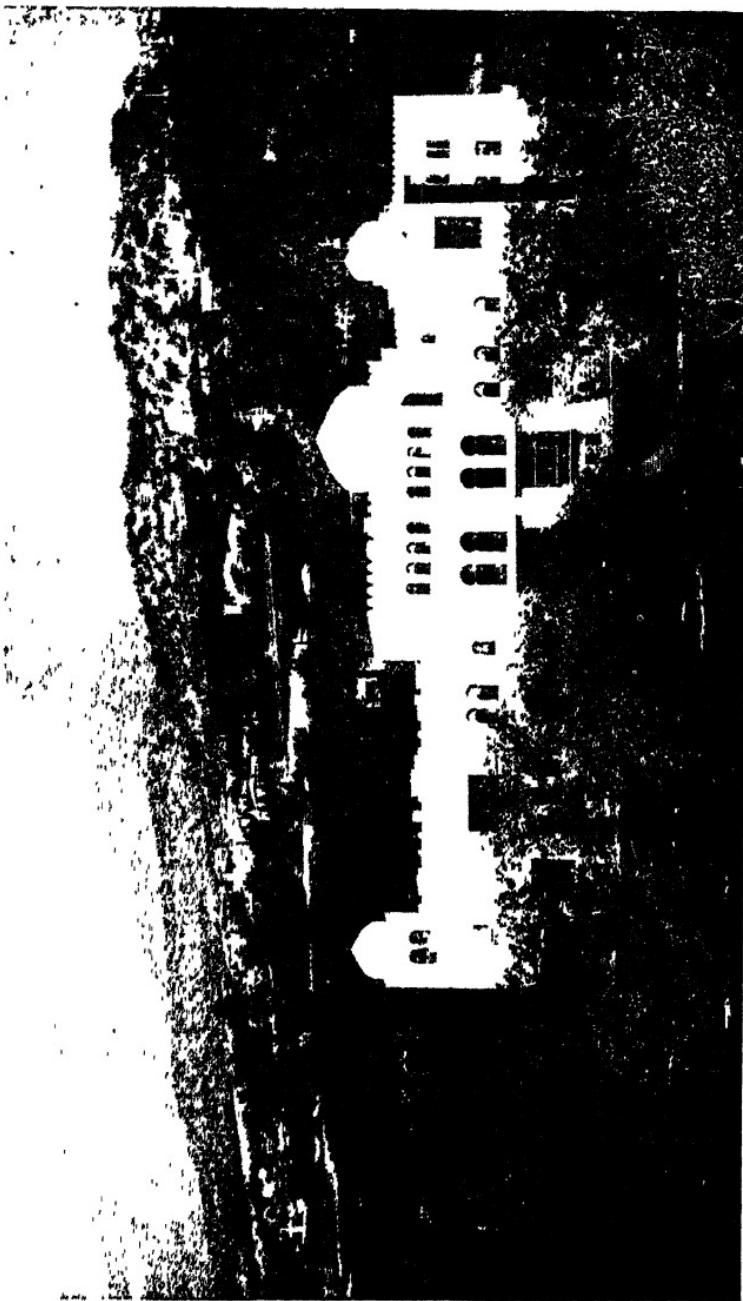
. . . As at Livadia, it is in the gardens that change of ownership is at present most obvious. Their former owners' legacy of Judas-tree and cypress may still flourish, but their other legacy of flower and lawn has inevitably passed with neglect. The one stretch of cultivated ground that has not been neglected is the vineyard of Livadia, where the Tsar grew his own Crimean wine; wine of the best which still has careful culture—because it brings in money to a Government greatly in need of it.

In style these white villas of the Crimean coast are a mingling of Italian and Eastern. Livadia is purely Italian in design; it might stand on the hills above Florence. It was built to the order of Nicholas II, and if (as my guide-book suggests) his taste in furniture was inferior, the same cannot be said of his taste in villas; judging by Livadia, he had the family flair for good

building. A few miles away stands the villa that formerly belonged to the Grand Duke Nicholas, who preferred the domed Eastern effect; appropriately enough in a country where Tartar villages are strung along the roads, where the Tartar language is still in use, and which, a couple of centuries ago, was still ruled by its Tartar Khans.

Less than two centuries ago; it was not until the reign of Catherine II that the Crimean Peninsula was indisputably a part of the Russian dominion. Even the Great Peter had got no nearer than Azov—which, at the end of a later campaign, he was forced to restore to the Moslem. And as long as the Moslem ruled in the Crimea, one of the main articles of his commerce with Asia was the slave. We think of the slave trade chiefly as a cruelty wrought by white men on the African, a means of furnishing the American planter with cheap labour; but for centuries Asia, the slave-owning continent, traded in European captives. Of that commerce the Crimean ports were the natural outlet; the merchant shipping of the Black Sea flourished by reason of the commerce in Muscovites, Poles, and Lithuanians. A Lithuanian traveller who visited the Crimea in the sixteenth century has left an account of the traffic which gives an idea of its magnitude.<sup>1</sup> ‘Ships from Asia bring arms, clothes, and horses to the Crimean Tartars, and start on the homeward voyage laden with slaves. It is for this kind of merchandise alone that the Crimean markets are noteworthy. . . . A Jewish money-changer sitting at the gate of Tauris and seeing constantly the countless multitudes of our countrymen led in as captives, asked us whether there still remained any people

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Mackenzie Wallace in his *Russia*.



FORMER VILLA OF THE GRAND DUKE NICHOLAS IN THE CRIMEA



in our land and whence came such a multitude of them. . . . When the slaves are led out for sale they walk to the market-place in single file, like storks on the wing, in whole dozens, chained together by the neck, and are then sold by auction. The auctioneer shouts loudly that they are the newest arrivals, simple and not cunning, lately captured from the people of the Kingdom (Poland)<sup>1</sup> and not from Muscovy; for the Muscovite race, being crafty and deceitful, does not fetch a good price. This kind of merchandise is appraised with great accuracy in the Crimea, and is bought by foreign merchants at a high price, in order to be sold at a still higher rate to blacker nations, such as Saracens, Persians, Indians, Arabs, Syrians, and Assyrians. . . . Sometimes beautiful and perfect maidens of our nation bring their weight in gold. This takes place in all the towns of the peninsula but especially in Kaffa.<sup>2</sup>

Till 1783, when Potemkin, in the name of his empress, Catherine, made an end of the Crimean Khanate, the trade in Poles and Muscovites continued. We, with our centuries of settled island life behind us, find it difficult to realize how imminent and recent in other parts of Europe has been the threat and terror of slavery. Something of the uncertainty that it added to life is illustrated by a legend attached to the 'Fountain of Tears' in the former palace of the Crimean Khans; the fountain was built by a Khan of the mid-eighteenth century, in memory of a beautiful woman he had loved and who was said to have been murdered by a rival. In the Tartar language the beloved of the Khan bore

<sup>1</sup> Which then included all Lithuania.

<sup>2</sup> Otherwise Theodosia, situated at the eastern extremity of the Crimean Peninsula.

the name of Dillarah-Bikesch; but by tradition she was born to Christian parents—a Pole, a daughter of the princely house of Potocki. And whether or no this particular tradition have fact behind it, certain it is that Poles and Russians born to power and wealth—Poles and Russians of historic name—ended miserably as captives of the Tartar. Across the narrow isthmus—the isthmus of Perekop—which links the Crimean Peninsula to the mainland, the Tartars, in possession, dug a ditch and raised a rampart which for many generations defied all assault; and through its ‘Gate of the Horde’, into bondage of the East, there passed the endless stream of Christian captives.

This slave experience of the Russian yesterday—how much ought we to allow for it in our judgment of the Russian to-day? The thought came into my mind in the city of Sebastopol when I watched a gang of unfortunates being marched down to the harbour by soldiers with fixed bayonets. They may have been political prisoners, they may have committed one of the other offences that the Soviet Union visits with a sentence of forced labour; I didn’t ask, because by that time I had realized that it wasn’t much good asking that sort of question; the only time I betrayed any interest in persons being marched along by soldiers, I was told they were being taken to an institution—character of institution not specified. . . . In England we are afflicted with a section of the population so vulgarly insensitive that it will pack itself into charabancs and drive up to Dartmoor in order to stare its fill at convicts; but the general and decent majority, I imagine, would be distressed by the sight of men marched through the public streets in duress. Such

distress, however, would be due to the fact that we have a tradition of personal freedom—not so strong as it was but still alive; whereas in Russia there is no such tradition—it would be something like a miracle if there were. Traditions take time to establish themselves, and there must still be a sprinkling of the elder generation of Russians who were actually born into serfdom; while alongside the domestic institution of serfdom there existed the foreign slave trade of the Tartars; a trade as ruthless and systematic as that which the merchants of Bristol once plied between the Guinea Coast and Charleston. It is one thing to break a chain and another to breed up a people in habits of freedom. It may shock one to be told by Mr. Allan Monkhouse that the number of Russians subject to the form of serfdom known as forced labour exceeds the number of slaves once owned in the Southern States; but the Russian, be he ruled or be he ruler, has the tradition of 'forced labour' in his blood. However we may try to break with our past, we are always the children of our fathers; it is because soldiers of the Tsar marched their convoys to Siberia, because the raiders of the Khan shipped their booty from Kaffa, that the Red Guards of the Soviet Union march the prisoners of to-day to forced labour. For much of what seems to us abuse of power in the Bolshevik regime there may be this simple explanation: the Russian people has not yet outgrown the tradition that those who hold power have the right to inflict slavery.

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Is there any part of the world that has seen more changes, known more masters than this Crimean Penin-

sula, which in times gone by was Tauris? Where the Greeks came to trade with the native Scythians and, having taken stock of its beauty and productiveness, strung their city-colonies along its southern coast; where the Romans, in due time, quartered their legions to keep guard upon the eastern frontiers of their world. Where the Goth succeeded to the Greek and the Roman, and built himself a stronghold whose remains still endure; and where, as barbarism rolled in from Asia, other races assailed him and mingled with his blood. Where the Genoese traded in the Middle Ages and built themselves forts to protect their interests; till their day of power also came to an end and the Tartar horde took possession.<sup>1</sup> A tragic country, fought over and torn; fought over again in the Revolution when the Whites were driven to the water's edge, and those esteemed themselves fortunate who could get aboard ship and scatter themselves over Europe.

One page of its history in the Tsarist past the Crimea does not seem inclined to forget—at any rate that section of it which dwells in the city of Sebastopol. There the siege of 1854–5 is still a memory, and a proud one; so, at least, I judge from the fact that one of the sights of the city is a panorama of the siege to which my

<sup>1</sup> I do not know if there is much Genoese blood in the Crimean mixture, but on the road from Sebastopol to Yalta we passed a young man standing by the side of the road; as the car, thanks to the condition of the surface, was proceeding at a crawl, I had time for a look at him—and the thought that flashed into my mind was: ‘He’s exactly like someone—who is it?’ It took me a minute or two to fix the resemblance—to Moroni’s portrait of the ‘Tailor’. It was an astonishing likeness; one would have said a younger brother who had taken to an open-air life. Rightly or wrongly, I ascribed the resemblance to Genoese blood.

guide insisted on conducting me. It is a good panorama, representing the attack on the Malakhoff redoubt and showing buildings aflame in the city, as result of the allied bombardment: and if the attendance on the day of my visit was representative, it is obviously considered an attraction—youthful Pioneers were inspecting it in force and there was a good contingent of their elders. Soldiers were still visible at the epoch of the Crimean War; in the background of the panorama were tidy arrangements of tents and batteries, and suggestions of red uniform which my guide pointed out as 'the English'. In addition to the panorama, actual relics of the siege are preserved—one of them the bastion where Tolstoy is said to have been stationed. . . . It may not be desirable to encourage pride in old wars; but interest in past achievement, even warlike achievement, has its healthy side in a nation which is trying to make itself believe that it has no yesterday and was not born the child of its fathers.

#### XIV. THE REVOLT AGAINST GOD

'THE churches in Moscow are countless'—I quote from a traveller of the nineteenth century—'scarcely a street without its cluster of green or red minarets. . . . In addition to this plentiful supply of churches, there are numerous shrines or oratories . . . which appear more frequented by the devout than even the churches themselves. Striking as the devotion of the Russian appeared to us in St. Petersburg, it is not for a moment to be compared with what one witnesses in Moscow. . . . Moscow is to the Russian the "city of the soul". . . . At the holy gate of the Kremlin numbers may be seen at all times kneeling at various distances from the hallowed spot. . . . No shop or private room is without its icon; even in the cabin of our steamboat was suspended a likeness of St. Nicholas.'

So the traveller of yesterday used to write of Russian worship, Russian reverence and faith; and on the strength of his descriptions we took it for granted that faith in God was essential to the Russian character.

There are still plenty of churches in Russia—churches considered as buildings; but it may take you more than a casual search to find one that is fulfilling the service to which it was dedicated. In Moscow and others of the larger cities, public needs and street improvements have meant the destruction of many—and the clearance

is not yet at an end. Of those yet standing some have been diverted to secular purposes—usually as museums—others are empty and abandoned. From a distance imposing, with their crown of Eastern domes; but when you draw near they are shabby, broken-windowed, uncared for.

The church that at length I found open—on a Saturday evening—also had its share of broken windows. Funds for the mending, I concluded, were lacking, but attempts had been made to keep out the weather with branches of evergreen thrust into the holes and woven to the lattice of the window frames. I was early, more than early for the evening service, and for half an hour and more I sat and watched while a priest—black-robed and with hair to his shoulders—made ready the church with the aid of a little old woman. Being but slightly acquainted with the ritual and calendar of the Orthodox Church, I do not know whether any special feast was being celebrated, but certainly the preparations for the service were elaborate. Little sprays of box were brought in by the old woman and scattered on the floor—a bare floor, without seats. There was hanging up of draperies and tying of somewhat tawdry bows round large candlesticks; and finally much lighting of candles in front of the various icons. Tawdry and meaningless the decorations might be—those on the candlesticks reminded me of pinafores and sashes—but there was something extraordinarily moving in this careful ceremonial observed by the few who still knelt to the God of their fathers.

Before the scattering and draping and lighting of candles was completed the congregation had begun to drift in; singly for the most part, now and then in

pairs; a small congregation and an elderly. 'You'll only see old people in the churches nowadays'—so one of my guides had informed me, and here was confirmation of her words. Of the forty to fifty who knelt in the church that evening the majority were bent and grey-headed. Two children there were, two small children, brought in by women who were probably their grandmothers; and I wondered, as I watched them kneel and bow and cross themselves, how long they would follow the old women to church; how long it would be before they learned in their schools to laugh at the idea of a God . . . . For against the atheistic tendencies of State education the Church is practically powerless; in 1929 the Soviet Government issued a decree dealing with the religious associations of Russia, and by one of its provisions the churches were deprived of the right to give religious instruction. 'Religious associations', runs the clause, 'may not organize for children, young people, and women special prayer or other meetings, or, generally, meetings, groups, circles, or departments for biblical or literary study, sewing, working, or the teaching of religion, etc., or organize excursions, children's playgrounds, public libraries or reading-rooms, or organize sanatoria and medical assistance'. They are further forbidden to give material assistance to their members. From this it would seem that the activities of a church, of whatever denomination, are confined to the holding of services; while it is expressly enacted that 'the work of ministers of religion, religious preachers and instructors, etc., shall be restricted to the area in which the members of their religious association reside, and to the place where the premises used for worship are situated'. This clause





*F. R. Yerbury*

AN ANTI-GOD MUSEUM

(The Cathedral of St. Isaac, Leningrad)

confining ministers of religion to their own congregations effectively prevents any missionary activity, and is said to have been aimed not at the Orthodox Church but at some of the smaller religious bodies, such as the Lutherans, who were making a stand against the attacks of militant atheism. Should these prohibitive decrees prove effective, the Churches in Russia, for lack of new blood, may die out at no distant date—and so fulfil the desire of a State which brooks no rival. A State that insists on being supreme in all departments of life can permit of no spiritual authority; the citizen's conscience, like the citizen's work, must be wholly at its own service. Christianity has a conscience and a standard of its own: therefore Christianity must go!

. . . . .

Those churches of historic or architectural importance for which Soviet rule has made itself responsible are by no means left to fall into shabbiness and ruin; on the contrary, care is given to their upkeep, though, like other needy governments, the Government of Russia has frequently pilfered its ancient shrines of such offerings of the faithful as were easily convertible into cash. There are icons which once glowed with rubies and emeralds, and which now have no greater richness of adornment than is given by pink and green glass. As such exchanges before now have been made by Christian monarchs, one can hardly blame atheism for laying its hands on easy money. Some of the 'superannuated' churches have been transformed into libraries, clubs, etc.; but for the most part they seem to be classed as museums — sometimes ironically as anti-religious museums. Among these is the Cathedral of St. Isaac

in Leningrad, the massive building with the columns of red granite which Great Catherine began and left to her successors for completion. Here, in the building which emperors raised, and adorned with mosaics and lapis and malachite, is a collection of posters, cartoons, and old religious prints—some of the latter sufficiently childish and crude. One of the objects of the collection being to illustrate the close connection between Tsardom and the Church; another to postulate the Marxian theory of religion; as a drug, an opiate, which the ruling caste administers to induce submission to its tyranny. As usual, the connection between Churches and wars is insisted on; as usual, the miracle is exposed as a trick of the priesthood. One of the miraculous exhibits 'shown up' is a mummified body which the faithful had venerated as that of a saint because, after burial, it had not decayed like the body of an ordinary sinner. This (enlightened atheism now explains to the public) was a perfectly natural, if unusual, phenomenon; certain kinds of earth possess properties which prevent the normal process of decay. Here, as elsewhere, the militant atheist does not confine himself to digs at the Orthodox Church—Ramsay MacDonald saying his prayers is numbered among the exhibits. Others deal with the practices of the strange heretical sects which from time to time have made their appearance in Russia; such as that of the self-mutilators which still survives, or did until a year or two ago; it founded its rites upon the text which speaks of those who 'have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake'. . . . Fanaticism is no new element in the life of Russia; to-day it burns in politics, of old it burned as fiercely in religion. The extreme of it was a section of the

Old Believers<sup>1</sup> which taught redemption by suicide; families and communities wandered out into the wilderness and died of sheer exposure or, more horrible still, sacrificed themselves as burnt-offerings; they would gather into buildings, barricade themselves in, and then set the place afire.

The drug theory of religion was the purport of one of the cartoons that drew my attention in the ex-Cathedral of St. Isaac. It showed a grey column of prisoners escorted by soldiers and marching to exile in Siberia; while beside the roadway stood a priest with cross uplifted, blessing the prisoners as they passed. I looked at it, wondering what was the suggestion, for, from my point of view, it conveyed no attack on the Church; the priest, in ministering to the unhappy, was doing his manifest duty. Here, however, came in the drug theory—I got the explanation from my guide. The priest was bidding the prisoners turn their thoughts and hopes to the hereafter; and it was their faith in the hereafter (so Bolshevism argues) that resigned the victims of the old regime to their misery. Their hope of immortality—that was the drug which kept them submissive to oppression. . . . So Bolshevism argues; and presumably is gratified by the thought that the misery that exists in its brave new world must be borne in full, and cannot be tempered by opiate.

<sup>1</sup>. The Old Believer schism dates from the seventeenth century when a section of the Orthodox Church refused to concur in the reforms of the Patriarch Nikon. The main body of the dissidents were merely conservative, holding fast to old traditions and ritual; but the schism produced also a number of extraordinary sects—whose remote origin should perhaps be sought in Hindostan and Persia rather than in Palestine and Europe.

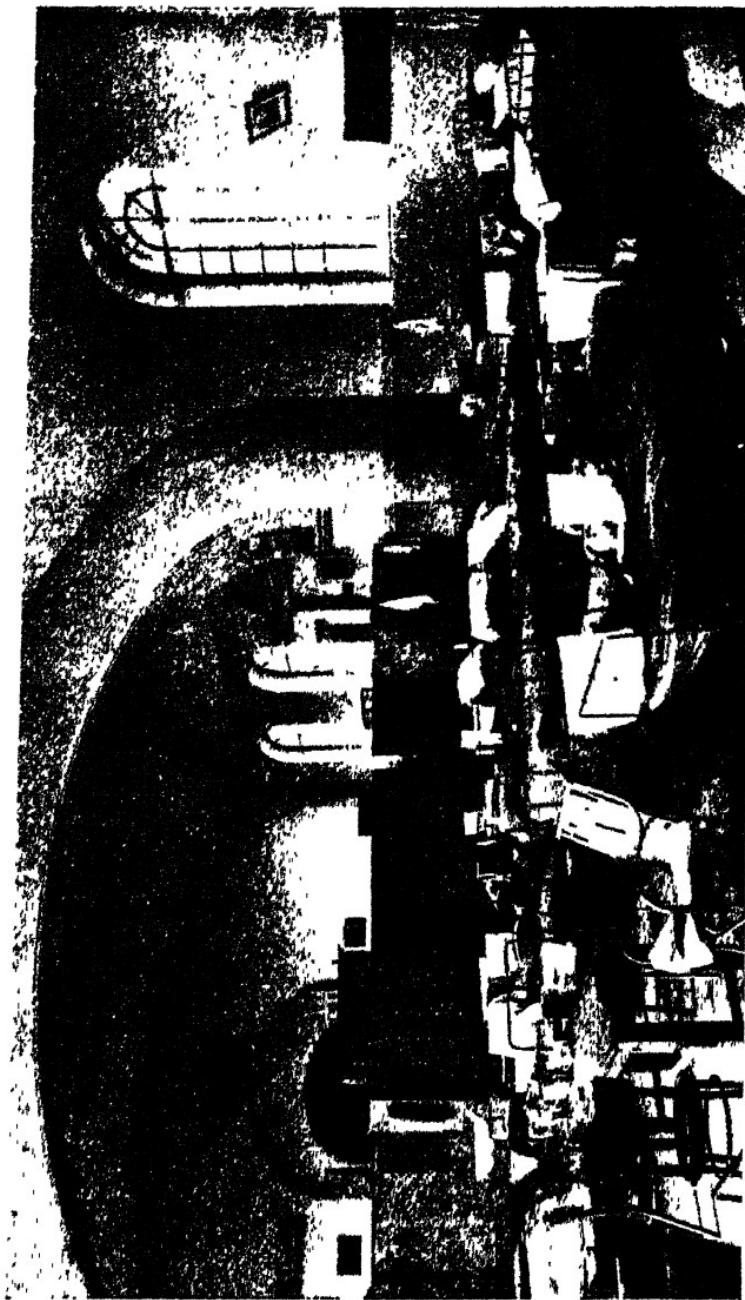
Like much else in the Bolshevik philosophy of life, anti-religion first came from the West; it reached Russia in the eighteenth century when Voltaire, the Deist, was widely read by educated Russians and when Catherine the Great, who for a time affected intellectual liberalism, was the active patron of Diderot. The French Revolution put an end to Catherine's liberal activities, but the freethinking philosophy she had once encouraged was not to be abolished by a change of autocratic mood; it had taken root and spread beyond the circles of the court. The works of the Encyclopaedists might be prohibited but they were read all the same. In its beginnings, then, the anti-religious movement was aristocratic, but with the nineteenth century came middle-class followers and teachers; and for these a Church which was subservient to the State was no match. The accusation that the Orthodox Church was an instrument of Tsarism has truth in it; Peter the Great designed to make it such an instrument and, to a certain extent, he succeeded. If it be indeed the case that the minor religious associations of Russia, such as Lutherans and Roman Catholics, have withstood the assaults of atheism better than the Orthodox Church, the fact is not without its significance.

Once a people has given its adherence to the idea of equality—equality in every sphere—it would seem to be as natural and inevitable that it should abolish its God as that it should abolish its aristocracy and intelligentsia. For whatever the equalitarian idea may be in theory, in actual practice it has so far involved more levelling down than levelling up. Even in matters material this



*F. R. Yerbury*

A CHURCH AT SAMARA CONVERTED INTO A CLUB



is usually the case, and in matters intellectual and spiritual it is a rule that has no exceptions. To a certain extent it may be possible to share out material objects on an equalitarian basis, if little account is taken of private tastes; but no one has yet discovered a method of sharing out intellectual attainments and spiritual values. Here it is manifestly impossible to level up; the stupid and the brutal can be given things to eat, can be given things to wear, can be given this or that in the way of comfort and amusement; but wisdom and knowledge cannot be carved up and handed round like chunks of meat. True, you can send all men to school; but that is not to equalize but to give an equality of opportunity which all are not capable of seizing. Wisdom and knowledge are an individual possession, whether inborn, acquired by discipline and work, or result of the tradition of a class; and once the equalitarian faith is widespread among those who are not disciplined to wisdom or bred to knowledge, then war on the spiritual and intellectual is a matter of course. The dream of equality may be beautiful and, as a dream, benevolent; but in revolutionary practice the equalitarian motive-power is envy, striving always for destruction of the object envied; the object that, by its existence, gives the lie to 'I'm as good as you!' And, after all, when you set out to equalize by revolution, what is there to be done but lop off the heads that thrust above their fellows—the heads of an intelligentsia?

On the war against intelligence follows naturally the war against God. God is not our equal; towards Him the attitude of 'I'm as good as you!' is impossible, since in all ages He has been something higher than ourselves, something we approach with reverence. The

conception of Deity alters from generation to generation, and sometimes from mile to mile. A strong savage, tearing his enemies asunder, a jealous ritualist, insistent on orthodoxy, a Father of His children, an incarnation of Love, a First Cause—Deity has been all these and many others, but always something higher than the men who defined their God in terms of the highest that they knew. Obviously, then, there is no room for God in a world whose ideal is equality. Yet, though Deity is rejected, 'man is by his nature a religious being, and the soul of man cannot live empty of religion. Veneration and adoration of something higher cannot be torn from the human soul. . . . Man has a tendency to idolatry that cannot be uprooted; he has a capacity for turning absolutely anything, every kind of value, into an idol. He makes an idol of knowledge, or art, or the State, or nationality, or morality, or social justice and organization. And to all these idols, behind which are hidden genuine values, man pays divine worship. Idolatry always makes use of undoubted values. . . . It always employs man's former religious psychology, directing to its own service all his store of religious energy. . . .

The passage is quoted from Berdyaev's essay on Russian religious psychology; and he goes on to point out that Communism 'requires great stores of religious energy and great strength of religious faith if it is to be put into practice. . . . It looks upon itself as the only true religion and will suffer no other to live alongside of it. It demands religious adoration of the proletariat as the chosen people of God; it deifies a social collectivity called to supplant God and man. The social collectivity is the one and only criterion of moral judgments and

acts; it contains and expresses all justice and truth. Communism creates a new morality which is neither Christian nor humanitarian. It has its orthodox theology and sets up its own cult (the cult of Lenin, for instance), its own symbols, its own feasts. . . . It has its own dogmatic system, obligatory for all, and its catechism; it exposes heresies and excommunicates heretics. . . . The Russian people are passing from one mediaeval period into another, after experiencing the Renaissance only in its small upper class. The workman is not at all inclined to pass from Christian faith to enlightened rationalism and scepticism; he is more inclined to go over to a new faith and a new idol-worship. Russian idealistic Communists (and the Soviet order depends entirely on them) are as believing in spiritual outlook as were the old Russian Nihilists, although their faith is now concerned with different emotions and longings. Communists are by no means sceptics, and that is why the sceptical people of the West find them so difficult to understand. Real fanaticism is always a product of idol-worship. Christian fanaticism also was the result of idolatry within Christianity, of an idolatrous perversion of the Faith'.

Such is Berdyaev's explanation of the intolerance of Communism as regards the Christian faith and its complete rejection of the God-idea. Perhaps its contempt and dislike for the idea of soul-survival is not only due to its conception of immortality as an opiate administered by priests at the bidding of tyrants; if life ends at death, if the human being is just the creature that we see and know, then it is possible—theoretically at least—to plan for him a future, complete and wholly satisfactory; a world that is well regulated, mechanically

perfect, inhabited by persons whose reasonable wants are supplied with little effort and whose leisure is intelligently spent. But planning for a life that ends with the body is one thing; planning for the future adventures of a soul is another. Those who are merely passengers through life will not have the same need or outlook as those to whom life is their all. About plans for the well-being of surviving souls there must always be an element of guesswork and uncertainty; their success and failure, their evil and their good are measured by a standard unknown. And the dream and passion of Communistic Russia is accurate, scientific Plan; the fitting together of mechanism, the control of commerce, the arrangement in pattern of humanity. Berdyaev says truly (in the passage above quoted) that the Russian people are passing from one mediaeval period to another; for in the Middle Ages there were no loose ends either in heaven or on earth; and the kingdom of heaven and its subject realm on earth both fitted into the nice tidy universe mediaeval theology had created for them. If any one attempted to disarrange the tidy mediaeval Plan, he was guilty of the crime of heresy—religious sabotage; and the mediaeval OGPU, cyclopean Inquisition, suppressed him in the general interest. As the mediaeval Plan entailed a flat earth, the discovery that the earth was shaped like a ball put it in need of emendation; and its defects were still more manifest when the ball-shaped earth was discovered to be rolling round the sun! The mediaeval Life-plan could fit in everything, as long as it excluded science; the Communistic Life-plan can fit in everything as long as it excludes the soul. Hence the League of the Militant Godless and its fierce crusade against the Churches: if

the world is to be fit for good Communists to live in, it must be cleared of the inconvenient soul.

It is, one supposes, because the Communist Plan is as essentially and narrowly religious as the mediaeval that Communism is willing to pay for its success so terrible a price in human suffering. In all ages men who have found a new faith and been dazzled by its splendour have set it, as a virtue, high above charity; if their faith is strong enough, charity to those who are not of the faithful may even seem to them a vice. It was a Russian precursor of the Revolution—Bielinsky, a nineteenth-century Socialist—who better than any has expressed this sadism of faith. ‘In me developed some vile, furious, fanatic love of freedom and independence of human personality which can only exist in a society based upon truth and valour. . . . I now understand the bloody love of Marat for freedom, his sanguinary hate for everything which wanted to separate itself from brotherhood with mankind. . . . I am more and more a citizen of the universe! I begin to love mankind in Marat’s way; to make happy the smallest part of it, I, it seems, could destroy with fire and sword the rest of it.’

Truly the human being is a strange and a terrible beast!

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The Soviet Union does not stand alone in its opposition to organized religion. All those modern states which aim at producing complete one-mindedness in their nationals, and which plan absolute control of all activities and developments—all such states, as a matter of course, must clash with any authority that does not submit to its ruling. Any authority, whatever its nature,

must in all things conform to the state code of morals, the state point of view—or go under. Fascism's definition of its own aim is 'a State of truly sovereign authority which dominates all the forces of the country' and 'in every field of collective life has its own mission to fulfil'. A definition which might well be accepted by Bolshevism.

A state, whatever it calls itself, that insists on supreme control in every sphere of life is bound, sooner or later, to have trouble with a spiritual authority. Even if it does not desire the trouble, it will come. It is unlikely that the Italian Corporative State has any desire to make an end of the Roman Catholic Church; whatever his personal religious convictions, Mussolini has a strong sense of historic continuity and, like most of his countrymen, is well aware of the prestige attaching to the presence of the Holy See. But though Fascism enjoins all respect for the Church, and instructs its children in Catholic doctrine, the moment the Church showed signs of disputing its sovereign authority and obtaining, by its system of clubs and sports, too strong a hold on the youth of New Italy—at once alarm was taken and the two authorities were in conflict. A conflict in which Fascism held to its intention of dominating all the forces of the country, even the forces of the spirit. . . . The new German Reich and its religious bodies have likewise clashed, and for much the same reasons; in Germany, as in Italy, there is no desire to encourage atheism or abolish the Churches—but the Churches must come to heel. Whether or no National Socialism succeeds in substituting its new 'German' Christianity for the elder forms of faith, certain it is that it has created a schism in the Protestant Church

and risen to power in face of the discouragement and active dislike of the German Catholic hierarchy.

In Russia alone there has been absolute denial of the spiritual element in man; hence in Russia the war between State and Church has its own peculiar character. In Italy and Germany the aim of conflict is to bring about submission of the Churches to the will of the temporal power; in Russia the aim is not submission but extermination !

## *XV. THE FAMILY AND THE COMMUNE— PAST AND PRESENT*

ALL the world over, from China to Peru, there is a weakening of the family tie; even in France where blood was many times thicker than water—even there the old authority, the old habit of clannishness is passing. In Russia, however, the process of family disintegration is probably swifter and more thorough than in any other quarter of the globe; in part—not wholly—because Communism looks on the family with a jealous eye, as an institution that absorbs some of the energy, some of the service that should be given to the Communist State. As I have had occasion to mention more than once in these pages, the teaching that the Russian child receives from infancy draws him into politics from his earliest years and centres his pride, his duty, his desires, and ambitions in the State. All the world over, education—the school—tends to weaken the influence of the family by setting up rival authorities: the authority of the schoolmaster, as against that of the parent, and the public opinion of the school community, as against the outlook of the home. In Russia this tendency is carried to extremes, because there educational authority has no hesitation in pointing out the blunders and failures of the home.<sup>1</sup> A younger generation that has been accustomed to correct parental errors of politics, manners,

<sup>1</sup> Witness Ella Winter's story of the cross-wearing child, on page 17.

and religious faith will probably lose, very early in life, any sense of dependence on the home.

There are also what may be called accidental factors, social and domestic, which make for the disappearance of family life. One of these is the house-room difficulty—the overcrowding which is said to exist in all industrial areas—in spite of town-planning and housing schemes and the immense amount of *bourgeois* property that has been taken over for proletarian use. In Russia, as elsewhere, however, there has been of late years a large-scale shifting of population; industrialization means migration from the country to the towns and from one town to another; and migration, till the builder has caught up with it, means pressure on accommodation—all the greater, no doubt, because local transport facilities are not up to European standard.

An extreme of overcrowding tends to break up the family for the simple reason that it is impossible to make anything approaching a home when all sorts and conditions are packed together indiscriminately. One of the reasons, no doubt, why crèche and kindergarten work has been pushed forward with so much energy in Russia is because the crèche and the kindergarten are absolute necessities in conditions where ordinary home life is an impossibility. For lack of accommodation the children of a family will pass most of their time away from the section of overcrowded tenement which is all their parents can call home;<sup>1</sup> and for the same reason, lack of accommodation, their parents—their elders in general—will spend as many as possible of

<sup>1</sup> As noted in the chapter on 'Birth Control', lack of house-room is one of the reasons often given by expectant mothers for desiring to terminate their pregnancy.

their leisure hours in the recreation rooms of their factory or club, or in the local Park of Rest and Culture. These public institutions are often the only places where they can have the comfort and recreation which, in other and less crowded parts of the world, they might get in their own rooms. All of this must mean a lessening of family feeling and dependence, and an increased sense of community membership and habit of community life.

It goes without saying that the marriage and divorce laws of the Soviet Union are not favourable to the family as an institution. With clannishness, and the sense of duty that goes with clannishness, there has gone also the element of permanence—stability. And yet another influence that must make for its passing—the *besprizornie*. Young people, running into hundreds of thousands—some say into millions—who have struggled through childhood without parent or roof-tree. Some have eluded capture and dragged themselves up—and to them the family means nothing, save perhaps a faint memory of infancy. And some have been rounded up and placed in institutions, which have performed for them the office of parents and kinsfolk, and where they have been bred to serve and obey, to honour in all things, the Collective Being, the State.

There is a substitute for the family of which I have been told more than once and of which I have also read descriptions; this is the 'commune' or 'collective', in which the members all club together and lead a sort of barrack-room life. The members as a rule are young people, and also as a rule of both sexes; ten or a dozen of them will manage to get hold of two or three rooms and set up housekeeping together. The difference between a commune and a collective is that in the first

the members put their all into the common fund—whatever they earn in the way of wages, they are bound to surrender the whole of it. In the collective the communal life is less complete and only part of the members' earnings are put into the pool—enough, presumably, to pay for housekeeping and property used in common. By the orthodox Communist, I gathered, this form of private barrack life is considered highly desirable—a translation of the collective principle into terms of everyday life. It is probable, however, that the prevailing shortage of house-room is one of the reasons why young people often prefer to club together rather than seek accommodation 'on their own'.

The best and fullest account of these 'youth communes' that I have come across so far is in Klaus Mehnert's *Youth in Soviet Russia*—wherein I found answers to several hitherto unanswered queries. What happened, I had wondered, if and when these young people fell in love and married? Was this compatible with smooth running of the communal life? or did it bring about complications? . . . This is the sort of question that a guide, however accomplished in the English tongue, will not always answer satisfactorily because she may not understand your point of view. Klaus Mehnert, however, does understand it and shows that there may be complications. For instance:

'Of eleven communards five were now married. But since housing conditions had not altered, the separation into girls' and men's bedrooms had to remain as before. This had a very unfavourable effect upon the young married couples. In despair Tanya wrote in a letter to her husband: "I want to have a personal happiness, a little quite simple and quite legitimate happiness. I

long for a quiet corner with you alone, so as to be able to be with you when we want to, so that we should not have to hide from the others, so that our relationship should be fuller, freer, happier. Can't the commune understand that this is a human necessity?"

'The journal shows that the communards understood Tanya very well, and were suffering under the inauspicious housing situation and its consequences. But to alter this in any way did not lie in their power. The housing question, a purely material question, became more and more the central problem.'

I have quoted the above because it illustrates the difficulties attendant on barrack domesticity; and suggests also that the process of transforming the individual man or woman into a being conscious only of membership is sometimes attended with discomfort. Another of my questions with regard to these communes related to a possible consequence of marriage—increase in the numbers of the household, and here again I got my answer from the pages of *Youth in Soviet Russia*. 'After much debate it was decided that children could not be allowed, on account of lack of space and the narrow economic basis of the commune. Their appearance would deprive the students of every chance of working at home. The following notable sentences appear in the journal: "Marriage in the commune is possible and permissible. Nevertheless, on account of the serious housing situation, the marriage must remain without consequences". This, of course, is only one example; but given the serious housing situation, it can hardly be anything but typical.

. . . . .

The Communism which is aimed at—and partially

practised—in Russia of to-day is a Western product, an import, its principles laid down by Karl Marx; but there are other brands of Communism beside those that draw their inspiration from *Das Kapital*, and some of the species are indigenous to Russian soil. The barrack form of domesticity described above has points of resemblance with another communistic institution of Russia, the old-time peasant family, which Mackenzie Wallace describes as 'a kind of primitive labour association in which the members have nearly all things in common'.

Farming in many parts of the world is a family job, with no direct payment of wage to the labourers; but with the peasant-farming of Tsarist Russia the family was entitled to claim more from its members than work for the common good on the common property. Any other gains of the individual member—any wages earned by working for outsiders—had to go into the common stock; the peasant family of yesterday was in truth a domestic commune. Its representative as regards the outside world was the *Khozain*, the Head of the Household; but within the family commune his power was not of the unlimited patriarchal variety, as other adult members of the family also had their say in the management of family affairs. Superficially there is little difference between this peasant-household system and that of the domestic commune of to-day; actually (and putting the blood-tie aside) there are certain important variations. The family held in common the plough-land and stock which were sometimes its main, and sometimes its sole, source of livelihood. The modern domestic commune, on the other hand, is based not on sharing of work but on sharing of income; though

its members may sometimes be engaged in the same factory or office or college, its real community of interest is in spending, not in earning or making. According to the author already cited, the domestic commune is often an impermanent institution; he gives a case of a students' commune which he describes as 'typical and instructive'. 'Of the ten communards strictly selected from a large number of young people and with regard to their fitness for a communal life, only four were in a position to remain in the commune. The others left or had to be expelled. They could not stand the restrictions on their free agency.'

The family was not the only collectivist institution in Russia of the old regime; there was the *Mir*, or village commune, of which the peasant family formed part—a system of local government in which the Slavophils of the nineteenth century saw the germ of political progress. This also, like the family, was a primitive labour association, and like the family it had its representative head, the *Starosta*; but in the same way as adult members of the family were entitled to a say in its affairs, so heads of households were entitled to a say in the affairs of the village commune. In the *Mir*, as in the family, property was held in common; each family owned absolutely the house in which it lived and its surrounding garden, but ploughland and pasture was owned by the village in general, and the village in general was responsible for the payment of taxes. The arable land was 'divided into three fields to suit rotation of crops, and each field divided into a number of long narrow strips—corresponding to the number of male members in the commune—as nearly as possible equal in area and quantity. . . . In all cases every household

possesses at least one strip in each field'.<sup>1</sup> The same process was gone through with the meadowland, which was divided into the same number of shares as the arable, and 'every year on a day fixed by the Assembly (of the *Mir*) the villagers proceed in a body to this part of their property and divide it into the requisite number of portions. Lots are then cast and each family at once mows the portion allotted to it. In some communes the meadow is mowed by all the peasants in common, and the hay afterwards distributed by lot among the families; but this system is by no means so frequently used. As the whole of the communal land resembles to some extent a big farm, it is necessary to make certain rules concerning cultivation. A family may sow what it likes in the land allotted to it, but all families must at least conform to the allotted system of rotation. In like manner a family cannot begin the autumn ploughing before the appointed time, because it would interfere with the rights of the other families who use the fallow field as pasturage'.

As to the system of administration: 'The heads of families must often meet together and consult in the village assembly and their daily occupations must be influenced by the communal decrees. They cannot begin to mow the hay or plough the fallow field until the village assembly has passed a resolution on the subject. Under the old system, if a peasant became a drunkard or took some equally efficient means to become insolvent, every family in the village had a right to complain . . . because all the families collectively were responsible for his taxes. This communal responsibility for the taxes was abolished by the emperor in

<sup>1</sup> *Russia*, Mackenzie Wallace.

1903 on the advice of M. Witte'. Witte, be it noted, was the promoter of industrialism in pre-war Russia and, as such, an opponent of a communal system which tied a peasant to his native village. It was thanks to him and Stolypin that membership of the *Mir* ceased to be a lifelong obligation; a peasant who had defrayed all his debts and dues could renounce his membership, or 'insist on his share of the communal land being converted into private property'.<sup>1</sup> Until this change in law and custom, 'no peasant could permanently leave the village without the consent of the commune, and this consent would not be granted until the applicant gave satisfactory security for the fulfilment of his actual and future liabilities. If a peasant wished to go away for a short time, in order to work elsewhere, he had to obtain a written permission which served him as a passport during his absence; and he might be recalled at any moment by a communal decree'.

The village commune, be it noted, came into existence before the era of serfdom,<sup>2</sup> as an association of free peasants. In time freedom was lost and the peasant sank into serfdom; but, all the same, the *Mir* continued to exist. It might be thought that an association of this kind, with clearly defined regulations with regard to property in house and field, might have been able to afford some protection to the serf, as against his

<sup>1</sup> This latter permission would probably be taken advantage of by the energetic peasant who saw a chance of making good; and who, having risen above the general level, might, in revolutionary days, be denounced as a *koolak*. The farmer-employer, the class to which the word *koolak* primarily applies, may have included the extortionate, but must also have included the successful by reason of intelligence.

<sup>2</sup> See note on Serfdom at end of chapter.



*F. R. Yerbury*  
A PEASANT AND HIS CHILD



proprietor. This, however, was not the case. If a peasant were bold enough to stand on his rights, the proprietor could easily enough get the better of him; he could remove the refractory serf from his farm and turn him into a domestic servant; or remove him still more thoroughly by selling him.

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It is notorious that the communizing policy of the Soviet Union has found its stubbornest opponent in the peasant; the Soviet system of collective farming has, to a great extent, been forced on him, and its introduction has often been marked by the process of suffering euphemistically known as 'liquidation'. Yet, arguing from historical point of view and precedent, it might have been thought that the peasant, to whom work in a collective society was no innovation—whose fathers for generations had lived and died as members of a communist body, the *Mir*—it might have been thought that the peasant would fit into the new scheme of things without difficulty. And it may be that, despite the natural conservatism of the countryman, he could have been induced to fit himself in, if the men engaged in the making of New Russia had not been under the twin obsession of the Mechanistic Plan and the Clean Cut with the Past. Collectivism on the Marxian system was the product of thought that is mechanized and urban; it presumed that regimentation of the human being which is a natural result of mass production and life in large communities. And it was applied in Russia by men to whom the past was a term of the utmost contempt; who, seeing no good in any of its works, desired only to destroy them root and branch

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and fling them on the dust-heap. It is unlikely that the idea of adapting the old rural Communism, by a process of growth and gradual experiment, occurred to many of the Marxian enthusiasts of New Russia; but if it did occur, it was rejected. They had their own Plan ready; the Plan of the *kolkhoz*, the collective farm, which fundamentally may be sound and wise; but whose details, in the beginning, were evolved by theorists, passed by bureaucrats, and applied by young men fresh from technical colleges and who, in part at least, were selected for their duties on account of their political zeal.

The above, to a certain extent, is supposition on my part, not statement; but in dealing with a country which shuts itself away, and whose communication with the outside world is almost confined to propaganda, supposition is often inevitable. And my supposition, I think, has the merit of probability.

NOTE. SERFDOM.—Russian serfdom was not a heritage from the ages of primitive barbarism; as a legal institution it dates from the end of the sixteenth century and endured for considerably less than three hundred years. The change in status, from free *krestyanin* to serf attached to the soil of his master, took place in the reign of Tsar Feodor, son of Ivan the Terrible; but the real author of the ukase whereby the change was made was not the weakling Feodor but his all-powerful brother-in-law and future successor—the Boris Godounov whom the British public knows chiefly in connection with Chaliapin. The reasons for depriving the peasant of his freedom were both economic and military; Russia in those days was a sparsely populated country, without enough tillers of the soil to go round. The peasant, therefore, was in demand; there was competition for his services; and the tendency was for him to desert the service of the smaller landowner for the better terms he could obtain from the proprietor of a large estate. For lack of labour, therefore, the small landowner class saw its fields falling out of

cultivation; and this, from a military point of view, was a serious matter, because it was from the class thus disastrously affected that Russia drew her military strength. They were a formidable cavalry, whose duty it was not only to follow their prince at his call but to provide their own mounts and equipment. This military caste was both useful and powerful, and in the eyes of the rulers of Russia it was far more important to keep it in being and to keep it well-affected than to uphold the rights of the *krestyanin*. Considering the unquiet conditions of those days and the constant need of the strong man armed, it is perhaps not surprising that the peasant's liberties were sacrificed to the landowner, by the simple process of denying him the right of migration. From that time forth he was a villein, bound to the glebe, and, as such, at the mercy of his overlord.

The status of serfdom was not accepted without protest; it was, no doubt, because he held to the tradition of a former freedom that the serf was so ready to rise in revolt—the history of Russia contains records of more than one Jacquerie. When Stenka Razin rebelled against the Tsar, the serfdom of the Volga region rose against its masters and followed him. Further, the Cossack tribes of the Don and the Dnieper received constant reinforcements of runaway serfs who, from tillers of the soil, were transformed into predatory warriors. Bearing in mind the peasant's long tradition of resistance to his serfdom, it is not surprising that he should have given trouble to the present regime.

## XVI. TRAINS AND JOURNEYS

WHEN you travel to Moscow via Warsaw, the first Russian station is Negoroloye; there seem to be several ways of spelling it. At Negoroloye is the custom-house and you change trains for Moscow; the frontier station, but by no means close on the Russo-Polish frontier; if I remember aright, there is a run of an hour or two after you have crossed it. But though Negoroloye is your first station it is not your first halt; that is just beyond the frontier at a Russian military post. Just on the other side is a Polish post—where also the train pulls up before crawling its few yards into Russia. The Polish military are installed in modern-looking quarters—a white cement house, very four-square and clean; but there is nothing modern about your first glimpse of New Russia; the building which houses the guardians of the Soviet frontier is probably much like buildings put up in the days of St. Vladimir, who converted the Russians from paganism. Built of logs, in the same way as a peasant's cottage, only larger; an outsize peasant's cottage, its walls coloured green—the right kind of green, suggestive of the forest. A touch of the backwoods and a touch of Hans Andersen about it; but no suggestion of that collectivized world which has rejected the Past, when you bow down and worship the Machine. Even the soldiers that come out of the green wooden house look exactly like Russian soldiers of the Past; they wear the same caps and the same long

coats that their predecessors wore when they marched in the armies of the Tsar.

We halted alongside the green wooden house and I expected a customs visit. That, however, was for Negoroloye, farther on; all that happened was investigation of the train by the military—chiefly on the underside; they ran along beside it from end to end, bent down so as to peer between the wheels. Do people, I wonder, ever smuggle themselves across the border, hanging on to the underside of railway carriages? If so, I should imagine there must be more people who make the attempt in the reverse direction! Perhaps it was merely contraband the military expected to find: in a country where so much is lacking—necessities of life as well as comforts—there must surely be a good deal of smuggling! At the same time, if it was only smuggled goods that were sought for, and not smuggled people, one would have thought the matter could be investigated at Negoroloye; smuggled people, of course, are in a different case, as they would drop off *en route*.

At Negoroloye you take your suitcases and leave your Polish train; that which will in due time take you on to Moscow is waiting on the farther side of the custom-house. Here, in the custom-house, are the first signs of internationalism; round the walls in large lettering are greetings to the workers of the world in four languages—Russian, French, German, and English. Customs and passports in my case were slow but quite amiable; examination of suitcases not by any means strenuous, and the only query the officer put to me was: Had I brought any diamonds? Books were passed in review, and a soldier lad who was standing beside the customs official took up my prayer-book and for some time

examined it curiously; possibly he recognized it for what it was—there is a family likeness about prayer-books in whatever language writ. Money, of course, must be counted by the customs and you get a certificate of the amount, to produce on departure from the country; but that procedure, nowadays, is not peculiar to the frontier of the Soviet Union.

Though my own passage through the customs was smooth, I noticed that one of my fellow-travellers seemed to be having some difficulty. This was a man I had had some talk with on the journey from Warsaw, a man of superior artisan type who was travelling to Moscow with his wife and young family. He was a Frenchman by birth, a Lorrainer, but was married to a German wife and had been working for several years in Germany—his wife's native tongue was as easy to him as his own, and he always used it in speaking to his three small children. He was going to Russia for good, he told me cheerfully; there was work waiting for him. From his enthusiasm at the prospect of the Soviet Union, I thought it possible that his political opinions were of a colour which made removal from the Third German Reich advisable.

It was while I was waiting for my own discharge from the customs that I noticed the immigrant was making somewhat heavy weather of it. There was a little group of officials round him and he appeared to be listening uncertainly; afterwards he seemed to be consulting with his wife; and when I went out to the departure platform, the officials were round him again. A hitch there was evidently, and I imagined it must be a question of payment—some expense that he had not counted on. I watched for him, feeling rather

anxious as the time went by, wondering if he and his poor little family would be left behind at Negoroloye? At length, however, the wife and children emerged from the custom-house and got into the train; then, just before it started—only just—the man himself came running out to join them. I should have liked to ask them what had been the hitch; but they were travelling ‘hard’ at one end of a very long train and I was travelling ‘soft’ at the other end; and when we arrived in Moscow the following morning, the platform was crowded, my guide was waiting for me, so I never saw them again.

Now it is possible—probable, even—that what caused all the worry on this occasion was nothing more serious than some passport formality or payment demanded by the customs; but on the other hand, there is a possibility that the immigrant was being persuaded to a step which he might afterwards find cause to regret. Because it was a part of my first impression of the Soviet Union, the incident remained very clearly in my mind; and some time later, when I was discussing my experiences with an Englishman who knows more of Russian ways and institutions than most of his countrymen, I happened to mention it, and asked him if he could guess what the trouble was about—was it a case of unexpected dues at the frontier? His reply was, that it was quite possible the man was being persuaded to sign an application for Russian nationality. It is not unusual, he said, for foreign consulates in the Soviet Union to be asked for help by men of the artisan type who have signed such an application because they were told that it would make things easier for them while they were working in the country, and also, he added, because they were led to believe the application was a pure formality. As a matter of fact

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it is very much more than a formality; having signed, they are henceforth citizens of the Soviet Union; which means, in most cases, detention in Russia for life. The consulates and embassies of their former nationalities can of course do nothing for them.

. . . . .

It is at this juncture that the ardent Russophile interposes his comment—sometimes indignantly, sometimes with a smile of contempt:

'Of course, if you believe all the lies that journalists tell you . . .'

To which my reply is that it gives me no particular pleasure to think evil of my fellows, be they Russians or Englishmen; and that the statement I have cited was made to me by a man whom I believe to be honourable and also to have had opportunity of verifying his information. In the unlikely event of his being in error, he would, I am sure, regret it as much as myself; but if, as I believe, his facts are facts, then they cannot be too widely known amongst men who enter the Soviet Union with the object of taking up work. I myself have had personal evidence that there are those in Russia, not Russian born, who would leave the country if they could;<sup>1</sup> and even the ardent Russophile should know by this time that the Government of the U.S.S.R. does not offer facilities for the touring habit to its nationals.

I would suggest to the enthusiastic Russophile that it is a man of his own way of thinking, a man who has been taught that Russia is a worker's paradise, who will think little of signing away his nationality; and it is as well to reflect that we may entirely approve of

<sup>1</sup> For the reasons stated in my Foreword I cannot give particulars.

*F. R Verbury*

'HARD' CLASS TRAVELLERS





a political system and yet find drawbacks in the country which runs it, drawbacks so serious that we avoid it as a place of residence. I have heard a Communist working woman who had visited Russia admit, in an otherwise admiring speech, that Russian sanitation left much to be desired; while a teacher of English in Moscow University, who has recently written a friendly book on conditions in the Soviet capital,<sup>1</sup> says that 'Ten years in Russia have more or less acclimatized me, but by no means reconciled me, to the treatment an average Russian gives to a lavatory'. On that ground alone I should prefer England as a place of permanent residence; and I should imagine that the majority of my countrymen, whatever the colour of their political opinions, share my preference for decent sanitation. The lack of it may be prejudicial to health, and if, like my immigrant, one had children, one might wish to remove for that reason.

The partisan habit of representing the Soviet Union as a kind of earthly paradise is not only rather silly—all nations have their defects and drawbacks—it is sometimes rather cruel; when unmitigated praise is swallowed by the ignorant, it occasionally leads to disaster. Mr. Bernard Shaw's paeans on the U.S.S.R. must have brought along a good many hopeful Communists—and not all of them found what they expected. One hapless pair whom his praise had moved to emigrate, in complete ignorance of what money-changing means in the Soviet Union, changed fifty pounds on the quay; as they would get about six roubles to the pound on the pegged exchange, would have no ration cards and therefore be obliged to buy their food at uncontrolled prices,

<sup>1</sup> *Ten Years in Soviet Moscow*, by Alexander Wicksteed.

their fifty pounds would only last them days. (A French business man who had made a flying visit to Lenin-grad, and who had either neglected, or had no time, to provide himself with a tourist's ration card, told me of a hotel dinner, nothing out of the way, which ran him into seven hundred francs. Thanks, of course, to the controlled value of the rouble.) I suggest, therefore, in the interests of the proletarian emigrant, that the Russophile publicist makes up his mind that perfection is nowhere attainable on earth, not even in the Soviet Union; and that it should not be deemed high treason to mention that there are ration cards in Russia; and bread queues and milk queues and paraffin-oil queues; and that the drains are not up to British standard. Nobody would make any trouble if we stated these facts about other regions of the earth—so why not state them about Russia?

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The restaurant car is not frequent on the Russian train; there was one between the frontier and Moscow, but in all my journeyings I don't think I remember any other. On one occasion, between Kiev and Lenin-grad, I was in the train for forty-four hours but there were no refreshments aboard. Now and again there is a station with a buffet, but most of the railway-refreshment business seems to be in the hands of the despised private traders. These, as a rule, are peasant women, offering their produce; sometimes on the station itself, sometimes standing in a row behind the rail that fences off the station from the road. Their wares seem to consist chiefly of bottles of milk; also radishes—the radish must be a staple article of diet in the U.S.S.R.;

and (now and then) flat muffin-looking cakes; and at a station on the banks of the Dvina there was a supply of small river fish, fried. The amount of private trading that goes on was another of my Russian surprises; I had imagined it all but extinct. In Moscow and Leningrad it is not so noticeable, though of course it exists; but there it is at the wayside stations; and at Dnieprostroi, on the outskirts of the town, was a regular market with booths and stalls, bustling with the traders and their customers. At Dnieprostroi the wares were chiefly food—peasants' produce; again a lot of milk and radishes; but at Yalta, the Crimean holiday town, there was a row of little stall-shops along the sea front where they sold shell necklaces and other odds and ends of the trinket kind, and garden produce, and even women's garments. The private trader is a publican and a sinner, but he obviously supplies a felt want.

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On a Russian train the guard does more than look at your ticket and clip it; he removes it bodily and you see it no more until you are nearing your destination, when he comes along and returns it to you. At first I accounted for this deprivation on a theory that railway passengers in Russia had a careless habit of losing their tickets, so the authorities kindly took charge of them; but I was told afterwards by one of my guides that the reason the guard empowered himself of the tickets was because he had to enter particulars thereof in some system of railway red tape. Bureaucracy, I gather, is a legacy from the Past for which the new regime does not feel its usual contempt, and I noticed that even the process of getting me about

entailed quite a lot of paper-signing on the part of guides, chauffeurs, etc. What with ejecting deadhead travellers and entering particulars of passengers' tickets, the guards of Russian trains would seem to earn their wages. Another of their duties is to lock up the carriage lavatory when the train halts, in case any one should make use of it in the station; there, however, their responsibilities towards the institution seem to end. Neither in their own persons, nor by proxy, do they think it necessary to clean it. This is the real discomfort of travel in the U.S.S.R.; personally I found it so repellent that I knocked off washing when it entailed a visit to the lavatory, and confined my cleansings to a handkerchief and lavender water.

Otherwise the arrangements in the 'soft' carriages are comfortable enough; as most journeys are lengthy and you are expected to sleep, there are never more than four in a compartment, the compartments are arranged on the couchette system, with two top bunks that let down at night, and sometimes, with luck, one gets a coupé. I had always understood that the plagues of Egypt flourished in the Russian train, and, as I have a natural affinity for vermin, I furnished myself, before starting, with powders warranted to antagonize the various breeds. This precaution, however, was all but unnecessary; as a rule I slept unbitten, even by the common flea. My immunity may have been due, in part, to the fact that the season was very late and cold; but obviously there is a good deal of deodorizing done in the carriages; your nose will inform you that the washable covers to the cushioned seats have not been washed in soap alone.

There are many things new in the Soviet Union, but

among them is not the 'soft' railway carriage. I have nothing against it on that account—it seems to me quite a well-arranged article—I was merely interested to note that it dates, in most instances, from the days of the oil-lamp. The oil-lamp has gone and electricity reigns in its stead; but there is the place where the oil-lamp used to be—the stand in the corridor and the hole in the carriage roof.

. . . . .

There are certain notes I made in the course of my railway journeys. I do not feel I have the right to draw conclusions from them; I merely put them down as things observed.

One of these notes concerns my journey from Moscow to Kharkov. Kharkov is the capital of the Ukrainian Republic; in addition (I quote an official guide to the U.S.S.R.) it is 'near the Donets region which is rich in iron and coal, is connected by a network of railways with the principal trading and industrial centres of the Soviet Union, and is on a main route to the Black and the Caspian Seas. . . . A tractor plant with an annual capacity of fifty thousand tractors is now in operation, and many other factories, schools, workers' clubs, and so on are either already finished or are in process of erection. . . . Kharkov is the centre of (local) government; the party and trade union organizations of the Republic have their headquarters here as well as the numerous industrial enterprises, banks, and mixed companies. . . . The city is surrounded by factories and many other industries. Everywhere there is intense life and activity. . . .'

The line between Moscow and Kharkov, then, is a

line between the capital of the U.S.S.R. and the capital of the Ukraine, a city of first-class industrial importance. The journey between the two is a matter of something like seventeen hours; I left Moscow about seven in the evening and arrived in Kharkov about noon the following day. The time of the year was towards the end of May; that is to say, the season of long daylight. I don't sleep well in trains and, as soon as it was light, was awake and looking out of the window. Certainly for twelve hours out of those seventeen I was aware of my surroundings and the passing traffic; and during those twelve hours, to the best of my belief, the number of goods trains that we met was four—which, between those two industrial centres, seemed to me sufficiently surprising to call for note. It was when we were an hour or two out of Moscow that it struck me I hadn't seen a goods train—and then I began to look out. In some of the larger stations there were plenty of trucks and engines in the sidings, but very little sign of activity.

. . . After that, on all my journeys I kept my eye on the goods traffic and, frankly, it seemed to me scanty and very largely to consist of traffic in logs. Wood, of course, is burned in Russia where we burn coal—in factories. The large bakery in Moscow I have spoken of elsewhere, which employs between six and seven hundred workers—that up-to-date bakery burns nothing but logs in its furnaces.

Another note concerns the stations in the Ukraine and those in other parts of the country. It was on the journey from Kharkov to Dnieprostroi that I became familiar with the people who came to beg food from the trains. The first I knew of it was when the halting of the train was followed by a sudden and furious

banging on the side of the carriage. With the bangs came boys' voices, crying, 'Give, give, give', and when I looked out the boys were not alone in their supplication; a woman with a baby was imploring—along the train others. And all through the Ukraine that sort of thing went on. Some of them may have been professional beggars—but they all seemed thankful when you flung them a scrap of your food. I put down what I saw.

The steppes of the Ukraine are one of the granaries of the world; the Black Earth Belt is a proverb for its richness. Yet it was there that the beggars came down to the stations for food. On the two-day journey from Kiev to Leningrad I noticed that the miserable begging at the train-side ceased after we had left the Ukraine. Instead, rows of peasants selling at the stations, and as we got farther north it seemed to me they had more to sell—garden produce and little flat cakes. There were more cattle to be seen on the latter part of the journey; and I noticed, passing some of the villages, that the cultivated ground was cut up into strips. That meant, of course, the old-fashioned style of cultivation; not the collective farm. I repeat, one cannot draw conclusions from an occasional odd village seen from the railway; but I did wonder, as I travelled northward, if there were any connection between the absence of beggary on the stations and the absence of signs of the collective farm? It is a query which I do not pretend to answer.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Note D at end of Volume.

## XVII. KHARKOV AND THE FIVE-YEAR LOAN

'EVER since Russia had pretensions to being a civilized power its rulers have always been inclined to pay more attention to the ornamental than the useful—to the varnish rather than the framework of civilization—and we need not therefore be surprised to find that, long before the native industry could supply the materials required for the ordinary wants of humble life, attempts were made to produce such things as Gobelin tapestries. I mention this merely as an illustration of a characteristic trait of the national character, the influence of which may be found in many other spheres of official activity.'<sup>1</sup>

That passage was written and published when Vladimir Ilyich Lenin was a name unknown, and its primary reference is to the industrial undertakings of past centuries; all the same, when I read it, confirmation leaped to my mind. Even the conducted tourist, so he do but make use of his eyes and intelligence, will find plenty of modern examples of the 'characteristic trait of the national character' which pays more attention to the varnish than the framework. One such example I remember in the city of Kharkov.

In the city of Kharkov I was shown over a large modern building which was the railway workers' institute or club—Kharkov being an important railway centre. (I understood that other workers were allowed to make use of it—certainly of its theatre—but primarily

<sup>1</sup> *Russia*, by Mackenzie Wallace.

it was a railwaymen's club.) It had the usual facilities and attributes of such an institution: reading-rooms, lecture-rooms, and even music-rooms where railwaymen's children were having piano lessons. There was a restaurant and a really magnificent theatre; the whole building was on an imposing scale, with high-ceilinged corridors and wide staircases—it was considered, and with justice, one of the sights and achievements of the new, revolutionary Kharkov. I think I admired it as much as my guide expected—and next day I thought of it when I stood on the station waiting for my train to come in. For the railway track in the station at Kharkov ran over ground that was anything but even—a surface of hillocks, depressions, and rain-filled lakes. It may have been safe—I don't know enough about railway tracks to venture an opinion—but anyway it wanted tidying up. I stood and looked at it and watched the rain splashing in the lakes—and thought of the railwaymen's institute with its beautiful corridors and staircases. A mile or two from the station, on the outskirts of Kharkov, there was another reminder of those corridors and staircases: the debris of an accident, engine and trucks, which had apparently lain there some time. The rolling-stock concerned may have been damaged past repair, but, even so, scrap-iron has its uses. . . . 'The varnish rather than the framework.' . . . It is doubtful if you can get rid of your heredity merely by disliking the Past.

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In Kharkov, thanks to the kindness of my guide, I was taken to the local Ukrainian literary club. None of its members could speak any foreign language, so

the conversation was entirely per interpreter — my acquaintance with the Russian language is not extensive enough to permit of discussions on literature. The aim of their work, they told me, was to illustrate and aid the Revolution—in novel as well as in pamphlet! Then I had to answer the comprehensive question—What did I think of the Soviet Union? Not easy to find an answer that should be honest and just, to my country as well as to theirs. I did my best; and asked the interpreter to translate me very exactly. I said:

'I think you people of the Soviet Union are to be envied because you believe you have found the way to set things right in the world. In my country we are not yet sure what is the right way; but I ask you to believe that many people there are trying very earnestly to find it.'

They took that in friendly fashion, smiled and nodded; but the interpreter was bidden to assure me in reply that their way was indeed the right one.

• • • • •

It was at Kharkov also that I saw something of the drive for the *Pyatiletka*—the loan of three thousand million roubles that is to finance the Second Five-Year Plan. There were processions through the town with bands and the usual red flags; they were composed, I understood, of associations, such as trade unions, whose members wished to show that they had 'done their bit' towards building the Socialist State. The procedure, I was told, was for the trade-union authorities to decide the amount that its members must subscribe to the loan; the usual contribution being one month's earnings, though of course the patriotic were at liberty

to increase the amount—my guide in Kharkov, an ardent revolutionary, had subscribed above the rate required. It may be that such willingness to subscribe is the rule; but all the same (given the trade-union methods described), to a certain extent the loan must be considered a forced one.

To me, however, the really interesting point about the Five-Year Loan was this: all these good citizens of the Soviet Union who are requested or obliged to contribute to the loan are thereby transformed by their Communist Government into capitalists!! . . . It was an astonishing conclusion, but I didn't see how I could escape it! If the Soviet Government meets its liabilities towards these investors they will be drawing interest on their savings in just the same manner as the holders of Government stock in England or France or Japan or America or any other unregenerate region. I have read very carefully an official statement, issued by the State Bank of the U.S.S.R., and it seems to bear out my conclusion; as I am aware, however, of my own vagueness with regard to financial terms and matters, I am quoting its essential paragraphs. The pamphlet in question is published in English, for the benefit of the foreign investor, whom it is also desired to attract. It is headed: *State Internal Loan. The Second Five-Year Plan (Issue of the First Year)*, and it begins with an explanation of the purposes of the loan and a paean over the success of the First Five-Year Plan.

'In the realization of the slogan: "The Five-Year Plan in Four Years", the Workers of the Soviet Union, under the leadership of the Communist Party and its Leninist Central Committee, with Stalin at its head, have succeeded in winning a world-wide historical victory. . . .

'Because of the increase in the sources that financed the Socialist reconstruction, during the period of the First Five-Year Plan there were created tens of gigantic Socialist industrial enterprises, thousands of State farms and machine-tractor stations, hundreds of thousands of collective farms; there was unfolded a colossal "re-building" plan, which raised the material and cultural level of the population.

'The successes of the First Five-Year Plan have made realizable the practical task of the Second Five-Year Plan—the building of a classless Socialist society.

'The fulfilment of the plan for 1933—the first year of the Second Five-Year Plan—demands the concentration of all the resources of the country, a widening of the sources of supply for the financing of construction called for in the Second Five-Year Plan.

'To assure the financing of construction during the first year of the Second Five-Year Plan, the Central Executive Committee and the Soviet of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R. have issued a State Internal Loan under the title: Loan of the Second Five-Year Plan (Issue of the First Year), in the sum of 3,000 million roubles.'

Then follows the section devoted to the terms of the loan.

'The loan has been issued for a period of ten years, from October 1st, 1933, to October 1st, 1943.

'The loan has been issued in two forms:

'(a) Interest-bearing.

'(b) Premium-bearing. (Every bond must draw a premium.)

'*Denominations. Bonds of the interest-bearing issue*





NEW PALACE OF INDUSTRY AT KHARKHOV

have been issued in denominations of 100 roubles each, part of which have been subdivided into fractions of 25 roubles each and 10 roubles each. Bonds of the premium-bearing issue are in denominations of 100 roubles each, part of which have been subdivided into fractions of 50, 25, and 10 roubles each. . . .

'*Income.* (a) Interest-bearing issue.

'Holders of bonds of the interest-bearing issue receive a fixed rate of interest of 10 per cent per year,<sup>1</sup> per interest coupons due October 1st of each year, the first coupon becoming due October 1st, 1934, and the last coupon on October 1st, 1943.

'(b) Premium-bearing issue. (Every bond draws a premium.)

'Income on bonds of this issue is received in the form of premiums. During the ten-year period of the bond there will be forty drawings for premiums, four drawings each year.

'At each drawing premiums will be drawn in the amounts of 3,000, 1,000, 500, and 250 roubles. In addition to such premiums, in the 32nd, 36th, and 40th drawings there will be premiums in the sums of 200 and 150 roubles. The face value of the bond is included in the amount of the premium. . . .

'*Redemption of the Loan.* Redemption of the interest-bearing issue begins October 1st, 1939, and is carried out by means of annual redemption drawings, at each of which one-fifth of the entire issue is called for redemption. The final fifth is called for redemption on October 1st, 1943, maturity date of the loan.

'Redemption of the premium-bearing issue is coincident with the drawings for premiums, inasmuch as

<sup>1</sup> Italics mine.—C. H.

all bonds which have drawn premiums are redeemed and excluded from further drawings.

'*Tax Exemption.* Bonds of this loan and income therefrom, in the form of interest, premiums, etc., as well as transactions with bonds, are not subject to any State or local taxes of the U.S.S.R. . . .'

The rest of the circular is an explanation to the foreigner of the method whereby he can purchase the bonds, and the advantages accruing from such purchase. One paragraph is to the effect that:

'All transactions in connection with the purchase and repurchase of bonds are effected in foreign currency on the basis of the gold parity of the rouble, at the rate of exchange existing on the date of such transactions.' My ignorance of financial matters is profound, but if this means that the British investor is being asked to pay a pound sterling for six roubles' worth of Soviet stock, it does not seem a very profitable investment. In fact it sounds impossible; but, remembering that I was asked to pay three and a half gold roubles—from eleven to twelve shillings—for the hire of two sheets for a night in the train: remembering that, it may not be as impossible as it sounds. (I may add that I promptly declined the sheet-investment and wrapped myself up in a shawl.) Foreign workers in the Soviet Union, who draw their salaries in roubles, are of course in a different position, as they can purchase their bonds with Soviet currency, on the same basis as Soviet citizens; and it is from them, perhaps, that it is hoped to obtain subscriptions.

But whether or no he makes a good thing of it, the foreigner has no significance in this loan business. He

makes an investment, gains by it or loses—that's all; he is acting in conformity with the laws and customs of the capitalist community he comes from. But the case is different when it comes to the Soviet citizen; according to an authority I quoted earlier in this book, 'persons deriving their income now or previously from trade or from invested capital . . . are prohibited from taking any part whatever in the government'. (That is to say, they are disfranchised; there is, in effect, a large disfranchised class in modern Russia.)

Truly a paradoxical region, this land of the Soviet Union! Preaching internationalism, it cuts itself off from the outside world and takes utmost precaution against intercourse therewith! Holding it a crime to draw money as interest, its citizens are not merely urged to invest—in defiance of their own first principles, they are practically forced into investment at ten per cent!

## XVIII. PEOPLE'S COURTS—‘WE HAVE NO UNEMPLOYED’

IT was in Kiev that I spent a morning at one of the People's Courts which dispense everyday justice in the Soviet Union. Most foreigners who have had opportunity to observe the workings of these courts have been favourably impressed; and if the Kiev bench and procedure are in any way representative, I agree with the general verdict. Agree very heartily; it is not necessary to be familiar with the language in which an accusation is brought or denied to see that a magistrate is giving shrewd attention and that his manner has the right magisterial admixture of authority and kindness. This Kiev man was also endowed with the sense of humour, which should be an essential qualification for those who sit in judgment on their fellows.

The magistrate did not sit alone; he was the central figure of three. The other two were described by my guide as ‘jurists’; an Englishman who had visited Russia and seen them in action called them by the title of ‘assessors’. Whatever their correct rank and status, their duty was to follow the proceedings; these two, at any rate, made no verbal comment on the cases, but once or twice wrote on a slip and passed it to the magistrate; and on one occasion all three retired to discuss the case before the decision of the court was pronounced. These ‘jurists’, I gathered from my guide, were appointed by trade unions, and the unions, in this

instance, seemed to have appointed with intelligence; their representatives—a man and a woman—struck me as very good specimens. The woman—quite young—was of the type one can meet in England in a provincial or small suburban shop—not smart enough for central London; she had a pleasant, thoughtful face, and her attention to the cases never flagged. The man—also young and attentive—had an unexpected resemblance to some old Italian portrait; a fair-haired Italian with a soft little fringe of gold beard. In addition there was a ‘clerk to the court’—a dark-eyed woman who was obviously capable. About the court itself there was nothing to suggest official dignity or the strong arm of the law; in appearance it suggested a rather shabby schoolroom, furnished only with forms and a trestle table—the latter for the use of the bench. No policeman either in the court-room itself or in the passages and stairs leading up to it.

The first case was that of a young man—quite a nice-looking lad—and my heart went out to him when I heard he was accused of stealing jam from the factory in which he was employed. The temptation to food-stealing in Russia must often be hard to resist; and in Kiev, where the bread queues put a pantomime first night to shame . . . I hoped the poor lad would get off.

I still hope so, but I never knew, because decision in the case was deferred. My guide, from the evidence, seemed to think he was guilty; if the presiding magistrate was of her opinion, the lad would get a sentence of imprisonment. Apparently, however, these courts are entitled to act on a reasonable presumption of guilt; I was told that, in a case such as that of the jam-stealing

boy, the magistrate might order an accused to be dismissed from his employment because, although there was no actual proof of his theft, he had given strong reason for suspicion.

The second and third cases dealt with employment disputes. A workman sued for wages from his factory management, and got them without much delay. Then a dispute which seemed to show that even in the Soviet Union there are differences of rank and dignity. The plaintiff had been engaged by the responsible authority of (I think) an engineering works as a 'technical referent'—whatever that may mean; but when he presented himself at the works, instead of being given his referent's post, he was turned on to what was evidently the less esteemed job of instructor. There was considerable argument about it and about, evidence against the contention of the referent-instructor being given by a gentleman who evidently occupied a managerial position in the works; but in the end the court decided for the plaintiff, who would get some form of compensation. Then came another claim for compensation; this time from a woman, a factory worker, whose coat had been stolen from the factory cloak-room. For this theft she held that the management of the works was responsible, as it was bound in law to take charge of the employees' garments; she therefore put in a claim for a hundred roubles as the price of a new coat. An interesting detail, in this connection, was that the abstracted garment, bought several years ago, had only cost seventy-five; the justification for her claim being, that prices had risen since the other coat was bought and it would be impossible now to buy a similar garment for anything less than a hundred. The defence was

also interesting; it was admitted that a factory management is bound to take care of the workers' clothes during working hours; it was pointed out, however, that the theft was not committed during working hours—the coat disappeared at an hour when its owner had finished her day's work in the factory and was attending a committee in the building. Here again the bench deferred its decision; inquiry was being made into the woman's circumstances—my interpreter said that the probable result would be an order for a coat on some co-operative store. . . . Remembering the story of the man who had waited three years for an overcoat, I only hoped she would get it!

The fifth case—the last I sat through—was the star turn of the proceedings. Though my interpreter threw in a word here and there, I hardly needed her services—the little drama was so obvious and played on such familiar lines. Motive: claim for alimony on the part of 'unregistered' wife left with baby. Ex-unregistered wife, a quite attractive young woman with a turn-up nose, had the baby girl with her and gave its name as Lydia; babies in this part of the world are still swaddled, and Lydia was a straight little bundle without visible arms or legs. Her father, who disputed the title, by his name was of Polish descent. (Before the First Partition the kingdom of Poland extended almost to Kiev.) He was a soldier and a smart one—a non-commissioned officer, I gathered—and to all appearances a bit of a Don Juan. If so, there was excuse to be made for him; Nature had turned him out extraordinarily good-looking—a jolly, handsome, careless young soldier with whom girl after girl was bound to fall in love. Having left Lydia's mother, he had taken to himself another wife

and (perhaps not unnaturally) was desirous of evading the cost of his daughter's upkeep. Russian law gives the child to the mother but it insists on the father paying his share, and that share, to our English ideas, is astonishingly large; in this instance the claim was for fifty per cent of the young soldier's income. The lines of defence he adopted were two: in the first place (of course) the child was not his; in the second, though he and the mother had lived together, yet that wasn't his responsibility as the advances—the love-making—had all come from her. I guessed what he was saying before my interpreter whispered me; and the statement, I noticed, was as mirthfully received in a Russian court as it would have been in an English. The presiding justice, with a twinkle in his eye, assured the young man he accepted the statement—but that didn't prevent him from being the father of the child. At this juncture Lydia demanded refreshment, with howls; and the court, having heard both sides, retired to consider its decision. During its absence the waiting public discussed the case freely, the general sympathy being with Lydia and her mother. Again it was not necessary to understand the language when an elderly gentleman, pointing from Lydia to the embarrassed soldier, asked, Wasn't she his living image? Much responsive mirth among his hearers—and triumphant smiles on the part of Lydia's mother. All the same, there were times when she was near to tears; and my guide, I think, was right when she suggested that she'd have the young man back if she could!

At length, after a wait of half an hour or thereabouts, the return of the bench and the verdict: forty per cent of the soldier's earnings, but a right of appeal within



BOYS OF A 'COLLECTIVE' FARM SCHOOL



ten days. As long as the young man remains in the army, the payments will no doubt be made regularly; but in the case of migratory workmen—and by all accounts there are plenty in Russia—there must be difficulties about extracting alimony payments, just as there are elsewhere. I reflected, as I left the court, that, at this rate of alimony, if the young man fathered many more children and changed many more wives, there would soon be nothing left for him to live on!

. . . There is a story which I think I have seen in English print but which I repeat because it illustrates (if with exaggeration) a difficulty that must sometimes occur. The defendant in an action for alimony, being ordered to pay a certain proportion of his earnings to a former wife, explained that this was impossible as practically all his earnings were appropriated by other wives and families. When asked how he managed to exist without an income, his answer was that he lived on the alimony that his present wife was receiving from her former husband!

The benefits of the Russian system of birth control are not confined to women; and as long as the law is as insistent as at present on the rights of the child, as against the father, so long, one imagines, will prospective fathers be inclined to persuade their wives into the *abortarium*. It came out in the evidence that there had been a difference of opinion on this very subject between Lydia's father and mother; the mother desiring the advent of her baby, the father wanting to get rid of it.

One abuse in paternity cases which is rife in England is impossible under Russian law: it is no use for a young man to bring half a dozen of his friends to swear they have had relations with the woman who accuses

him of being the father of her child. In the Ukraine that means that the men will all share the expense of the child; my informant was not sure if it was the same outside the Ukraine, but thought that it was left to the court to decide which among them should pay. Anyway there is no escape from payment, and therefore no encouragement to faked accusations of loose living.

There are many reasons for remembering Kiev; which is the mother of all Russian cities and the site of Russia's ancient holy places. Here, on the hill, were worshipped the old gods whom Vladimir flung into the Dnieper when he herded his subjects into church. And here, on the hill, in succession to old idols, rose the Lawra, the monastery-town and place of pilgrimage, with its churches and catacombs, its relics, its icons, its treasures offered by the princely. The eleven hundred monks of the monastery-town were scattered out into the world by revolution; but the Lawra itself stands uninjured, in magnificence of building and adornment. So does the Sophia Cathedral in the town, with its treasures of mosaic and fresco; and a pavilion, once imperial, that again bears witness to the Romanov love of good building. A city of long, often bloodstained, tradition; that has been fought over and sacked, that has risen from its ashes. That was fought over yesterday by Reds, Whites, and Poles; where they show you the graves of revolutionaries, buried with honour. . . . Somewhere, I suppose, are the graves of anti-revolutionaries; but it is the habit of those who make revolutions to remember only the blood their opponents have shed.

Much about the time I was in the city of Kiev, a representative of the Soviet Union, at an Economic Conference held in London, was repeating the slogan of the Soviet Union: 'We have no unemployed!'

Who am I, a passing tourist, to contradict M. Litvinov? Still, even a passing tourist may ask: Who are these people that one sees in the streets of Kiev? Elsewhere, I should have taken them for unemployed, and unemployed of the most wretched! . . . The beggars who stand and hold out their hands; the gutter-merchants; the peasants with their poor belongings roped to their backs—stopping exhausted and then trudging on again; the people who lie on the pavement to sleep; the children . . . Who are they, and why are they like this in a country that boasts of its immunity from the common misfortune?

One cold and wet evening, coming back to my hotel, I passed two children in the usual rags, sheltering side by side in an archway. As I made ready to go down to my dinner, in my mind's eye I saw them again; and I knew that the thought of those pitiful boys would come between me and enjoyment of my warmth and food; it was in sheer self-defence that I took some oddments from my stock of provisions, put on my coat, and went out again. The children were still sitting in the archway and I put the bits of food into their hands; as I did so, from the darkness behind them came a sound that I first thought was made by an animal—something between snarl and whine. . . . A man who had seen food, glaring at it; and who, I am sure, would have snatched from the children if there had not been more to give him.

*We have no unemployed!* But who are these?

## XIX. SOME ASPECTS OF THE EXPERIMENT— ‘POTEMKIN’—DIFFERENTIATION

ON one of the stages of my homeward journey I fell in with a French industrialist who also was not long out of Russia. His visit, however, had been for business purposes only; a dash from France to Leningrad to settle the terms of a contract. This was not the first time he had dealt with representatives of the Soviet Government and his dealings had always been satisfactory; further, he was interested in what he had learned of Soviet planning for the future—these people, he said, had ideas. His business interviews, plus a Leningrad hotel, were his only personal experiences of the Soviet Union; had time been available, he would have liked to see more, and he began to question me concerning my own experiences. Presently he asked me if anywhere on my travels I had seen signs of the scarcity which was said to exist but which Soviet partisans denied. I told him of the length of the bread lines, the beggars of the Ukraine—which must surely indicate scarcity? We talked for a little and then he said suddenly: ‘I ’ll tell you what I ’ve always suspected, and I believe I ’m right: they pay for my machinery with the bread they take from their peasants ’ mouths. But they want the machinery and they ’re going to have it; and if I don ’t take the price, others will.’

I also believe my fellow-traveller is right; I do not see how it can be otherwise. There are bread lines;

but the Government exports corn. Save by exception the Russian does without butter; which his Government also exports. And if the factory worker is called on for sacrifice in the cause of Soviet industry, still greater is the sacrifice demanded of the worker on the land; for what is going on in Russia is not only the struggle between two social systems but the eternal struggle between the countryside and the city. Because he can be organized and voice his mass desires, the townsman as a rule has a strong advantage in the struggle; and in Russia, where the aim is organization of all men's minds and wills—where the supreme of admiration, the substitute for God, is the Machine—there, it stands to reason, the war on the countryman will be ruthless. . . . The Soviet Union (so economists assure us) is paid for its exported corn and butter by 'goods and services' from the nations to whom it exports them; unfortunately there are 'goods and services' which stay a man's hunger and other 'goods and services' which don't! A fact which seems to have some bearing on the problem of trade between the nations.

In times gone by there was a catchword, 'Go and eat coke!' and that futile catchword came back to my mind as I sat in the train and listened to my French industrialist. We receive your edible 'goods and services' and pay you in petrol engines, dynamos, and such-like—whereupon you have to eat coke! . . . Much the same thing, this Russian trade business, as the Irish trade business at the time of the Famine; when orthodox economists of the Manchester School saw no reason for prohibiting the export of good corn from Ireland.<sup>1</sup> By

<sup>1</sup> I was told in my youth that my Irish grandfather, during the Famine, shot all his hunters, because they ate corn that was needed

the industrialist of Victorian England the principles of Free Trade were venerated with something of the fanaticism—the religious fanaticism—wherewith Soviet Russia venerates the principles of Marxism. While the Irish peasant hungered, Irish food was shipped abroad; while the Russian peasant hungers, Russian food sails out of Russian ports. One of the results of the British embargo after the trial of the Moscow engineers was that butter was eaten by a good many Russians who had not tasted it for years.

Early Victorian England and modern Soviet Russia, unlike in much are yet alike in this: an enthusiasm for their new industrialism, a belief in the magnificence of its possibilities, and a willingness to sacrifice all other interests to its needs. And the Russian problem of 'building the Socialist State' is complicated by—intertwined with—the early Victorian problem of cheap food for the factory hand.

• • • • •

If this 'Russian Experiment' succeeds; if the Socialist State on the Marxian model is well and permanently built, then what will be the result on the human material whereof the State is composed? Progress? or deterioration?

For myself I have no doubt of the answer: Deterioration. The complete absorption of the individual in the crowd-life, the complete submission of his conscience by starving men. My grandfather was probably an ignorant person whose views on the exchange of goods and services would have aroused pitying smiles at the London School of Economics; but at least he had grasped certain elementary facts—that the finished products of Lancashire mills are not much good to Irish corpses, and that the human being cannot fill his stomach with coke.

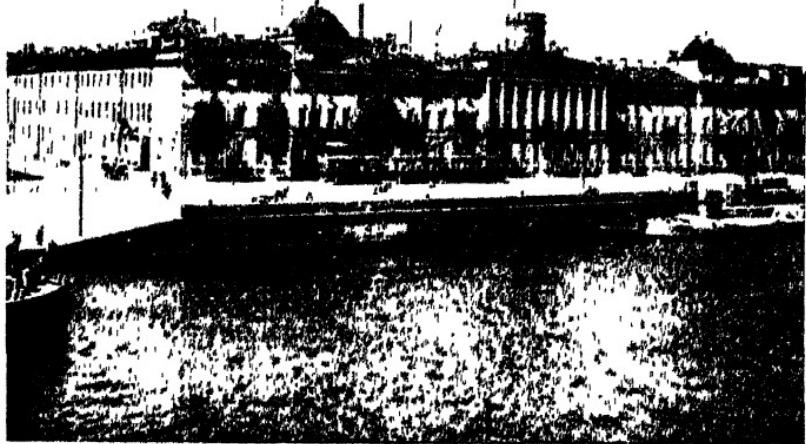
to the law of the crowd, is return to primitive conditions. 'The nearer we go back to primitive and simple forms of social organization, the greater is the degree of moral uniformity within them. . . . Each community has its customary code, and the custom of the early tribe contains everything which we now distinguish as law, morality, and custom. There is no law and no morality beyond the custom of the tribe; its members have no private consciences or independent rules of right, and nonconformity is unknown or promptly suppressed. The custom of the tribe is, accordingly, the earliest rule of right, the original moral code; the members of the tribe feel bound to conform to this custom; if they did not conform, their tribal and therewith their individual existence would be imperilled, and they would cease to count as factors in the tribal consciousness. The judgment of approval or disapproval, which distinguishes the modern conscience, is a slow development from this implicit acknowledgment of the authority of the tribe.'<sup>1</sup> . . . *There is no law and no morality beyond the custom of the tribe; its members have no private consciences or independent rules of right—is not that the aim and desire of the Soviet Union?*

Perhaps (it is not a pleasant thought) this Russian Experiment is an indication that humanity is nearing the insect stage of its development. The stage of the ant-heap—where also are workers and soldiers! Where, so far as we can see, collectivism—communism—has attained to its perfection, since there are no individuals, only members. In the ant-heap is a civilization far older than our own, and which therefore has had longer

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Sorley's *Moral Values and the Idea of God* (Gifford Lectures, 1914-15).

than our own to deteriorate; but which still possesses knowledge we have not yet attained, such, for instance, as determination of sex. All discoveries, all advances, intellectual or moral, are made, in the first place, by individuals who compel, persuade, convert the crowd. Is there any reason to suppose that that law of leadership did not apply in the ant-heap? that the collective mass of insects, without intellectual leadership, hit on scientific methods of birth control, disinfection, sex determination?

And if we desired, of set purpose, to substitute the life of the ant-heap for the human community as we have hitherto known it, should we not inevitably adopt the methods of New Russia? Should we not exalt the ant-heap state to a position of absolute supremacy, in the realm of morality as well as in the realm of law? Should we not insist on unquestioning conformity, and 'liquidate' the dissident and heretic? Should we not also 'liquidate' an intelligentsia bred on methods not our own and therefore liable to independent thinking? and breed up in its stead our own intelligentsia, narrow and obedient, trained in technical skill and state-worship? . . . These methods we should certainly adopt, if we aimed at the ant-heap; and the result, before many years had gone by, would be lowering of the moral standard and decrease in intellectual power. Inevitably so; in all the long history of the human race, orthodoxy, insisted on, has always meant stupidity. Moral stupidity as well as intellectual; bluntness of soul and of brain. With the tightening of the collective bond there goes—it seems inevitably—an increase of cruelty and ruthlessness; it is when he is most conscious of his membership, his comradeship, that man is nearest to the brute.



*F. R. Yerbury*

TWO VIEWS OF LENINGRAD FROM THE RIVER



The explanation being simple enough: man, as individual, is responsible for his actions; when he is member or comrade, his responsibility is largely, perhaps wholly, taken from him. Hence, as members and comrades, men, otherwise decent, will be guilty of actions that in private life they would shrink from. The life of the ant-heap, where membership is strongest, is a life extraordinarily pitiless.

In the insect state all are enslaved for the common good—which may well be the way the Russian Experiment is tending? And after all, in the light of modern developments, who can be sure that our actual and material surroundings in the future may not bear a close resemblance to the ant-heap? Given command of the air without command of the human temper—without effective machinery for the suppression of war, class and national—and what means of preservation will be left to poor humanity but to tunnel its dwellings underground? . . . When that comes to pass, then the insect-minded state will have its appropriate habitat!

At time of writing—1933—the Russian Experiment has been sixteen years in the making; and if the world in general is to learn from the experiment, it would be of inestimable advantage to know with exactness where it has succeeded and where failed. Unfortunately the difficulties in the way of such an estimate are enormous; the first and most formidable being the spirit of partisanship which demands either a stubborn aversion from all things Russian or—more often—a rabid admiration. So long as that spirit of partisanship endures, facts, even when obtainable, cannot be made full use

of—the partisan will distort them or prefer his own vehement fantasy.

In spite of the careful isolation of Soviet Russia, facts concerning the country are exported, do accumulate; some are favourable and some the reverse—the difficulty here is to ascertain which facts among them can be accounted representative. The jolly, well-fed factory hands who exchanged greetings with Mr. Bernard Shaw—are they typical of the mass of the Russian population? and such hunger-stricken beggars as I saw in the Ukraine—do they represent only a minority of no great importance? Or is it the other way round, and are the well-fed and contented in the minority? Who, things being as they are, shall venture to pronounce with decision? All that the ordinary visitor can do—the ordinary visitor such as myself—is to bring out some little grain of fact and observation and add it to the common accumulating heap; in the hope that, minute as it is, it may come in useful, by helping to determine the average.

Yet another difficulty is the practice known as ‘eyewash’; which again should be looked on as a Russian and not a specifically Bolshevik habit. If Russian officialdom to-day sets its stage in a fashion calculated to impress the beholder to the point of deception, why, so did Russian officialdom of the Past! Is there not the legendary, magnificent instance of the eyewash practised by Potemkin, minister and favourite of Catherine the Second and Great? According to Ségur, when Catherine made a tour of inspection in her southern provinces, Potemkin, their governor, to impress her with the flourishing condition of the country, caused tidy ‘stage’ villages to be run up on the route she

would traverse—tidy stage villages, inhabited for the moment by industrious and prosperous-looking peasants. Undoubtedly the Potemkin tradition still lingers and must be allowed for by the visitor to the Soviet Union; but if he is of Communist persuasion and sympathy, it may comfort him to remember that it is a Potemkin tradition, not a Lenin—a legacy from the much-despised Past!

It is, I hope, hardly necessary to explain that by 'eyewash' I do not mean the desire to show of your best to the stranger—which prevails in London, in Paris, and Vienna, just as it prevails in Moscow. The attempt to make the best of your surroundings to the eyes of the foreigner may be prompted in part by national vanity but in part also by the impulse of hospitality—your guest must have the finest you can offer. It is only the perverted jingo, therefore, who will draw the stranger from admiring contemplation of the Kremlin or of Westminster Abbey to concentrate his attention on a Moscow slum or the latest atrocity in English suburban bungalows. By eyewash I do not mean the showing of one's best; I mean the Potemkin touch—misrepresentation.

Before I entered Russia I was told by a woman of another nationality: 'They'll tell you the people in the bread lines are standing for candy'. This, like one or two similar warnings, I did not at the time take seriously; now I can lay hand on heart and aver, that warning was not very far out. The first occasion on which I saw a queue was a day or two after my arrival in Moscow; the line was not a particularly long one and my guide, when I asked what the people were waiting for, answered quite honestly: 'Bread'. Rightly or wrongly, however,

I had an impression that she did not wish to pursue the topic, so I dropped it. The next time I made inquiry was in relation to a much longer line, running far into the hundreds; and here, frankly, 'Potemkin' was tried on me. My interpreter was slightly contemptuous of the lined-up hundreds; if there was anything unusual to be bought (she said) it was astonishing how people would wait and wait for hours; she herself would far rather put up with what was ordinary than waste her time like that. I can't say I believed her for a moment, but she was a nice, friendly woman, acting under orders, so naturally I did not voice my doubts. I confirmed them, however, by walking out alone later on and, when I reached the neighbourhood of the queue, halting a woman who looked good-natured, pointing at the line and asking: 'Why?' To which, with obvious surprise at my ignorance, she made the expected answer: 'Bread!' . . . Whereupon I bethought me of the artificial villages that once gladdened the eyes of an autocrat; and reflected (not for the first time or the second!) that the Russian of to-day, like the rest of us, is son of his father.<sup>1</sup>

It is unlikely that eyewash is reserved for the foreigner alone, and my suspicion that it is sometimes ladled out to the citizen of the U.S.S.R. has been strengthened by the author of *Escape from the Soviet*, a book which I came across while my own was in the making. Dealing as it does with the escape across the border of a convict member of the intelligentsia, his wife and child, its bias, inevitably, is against the Soviet Union; still, so far as one can judge, many of its details read very like

<sup>1</sup> Lest my bread-line experience be supposed unusual: it coincided with that of some American tourists with whom I compared notes.

truth; while the passage treating of large-scale eyewash, though it may not furnish actual proof of the practice, shows at least that intelligent persons believe large-scale eyewash to exist. It runs as follows—the convict is speaking to his wife:

'In the barracks we have to sleep on boards side by side; the allowance of space is eighteen inches per man, but the place is so crowded that one has to lie on one's side or we shouldn't all get in; there's no room to lie on one's back. There are a thousand men in a barrack. It's fearfully cold and draughty and snow blows in. The stoves are hardly ever lighted and there are such quantities of bugs round them that one can't go near.'

'Do you all live like that?'

'Yes. No, not all,' he corrected himself with a smile. 'A "hostel for specialists" (expert prisoners?) is just going to be opened in the town. The OGPU took a house, ordered plank beds for every one, engaged a cook and a charwoman. The prisoners will be given special rations and will be able to wash and undress.'

'How many will live in the hostel?'

'There's room for thirty or forty.'

'Out of ten thousand prisoners?'

'There's only some eight thousand left now, the others have been sent to dig the canal.'

'I suppose the hostel will be for show?'

'Probably. Why, Gorki might arrive, or Alexey Tolstoy, or some other writer or journalist. And in any case there will be an account of it in the official report. You know, at Solovki they made a film of the camp; prisoners had clothes given them for the occasion and were ordered to walk about and laugh.'

Naturally I do not guarantee the film story; but it does not strike me as impossible in the country of Potemkin's villages.

. . . . .

What one would like to know, as regards the shortage of common things of life, is: How much is it due to actual lack of material—lack of food, boots, clothes, handkerchiefs, drugs, paper—and how much to bureaucratic clumsiness of distribution? All the world over, the tendency of the official is to red-tape methods, slowness and stupidity; our own Post Office, which seems to be quite a favourable specimen of the official institution, took years (I have been told) to make up its mind about the installation of slot machines for stamps. Our Post Office, however, in spite of shortcomings, does deliver letters in fairly reasonable time; whereas in Russia you may stay several weeks and receive no letters—which finally return, in leisurely fashion, to the address from which they set out. Such at least is my experience, which I gather is by no means peculiar.

. . . Now, translate this dilatory inefficiency of the Russian Post Office into other public departments—and remember that all necessities of life in Russia are controlled by public departments—and it does not surprise you that, after sixteen years of Soviet rule, railway tracks should be in obvious need of repair, roads should be sunken with ruts and pools, suburban transport should be lacking for the workers, ration tickets should be needed for meals—and that there should be a scarcity of necessities which sometimes reaches famine-point. I cannot put my hand on the reference, but I remember reading that Mrs. Sidney Webb (whose pardon I beg if I

in any way misquote her) once gave it as her opinion that the prime and urgent need of Soviet Russia was fifty thousand good civil servants. The remark appears sound, only erring on the side of moderation; Russia of to-day is an enormous state-run business—administrative, agricultural, commercial, educational, military, industrial, and a dozen more departments beside. Its first need, therefore, must be employees, an army of employees, skilled enough, intelligent enough to run and co-ordinate the departments of this vast undertaking—this trust controlling the activities of one-sixth of the habitable globe. That need, however, was not recognized by the founders of Soviet Russia. In the beginning of the Bolshevik world was the theorist; who turned over to state management one-sixth of the habitable globe and at the same time ostracized, starved, and otherwise 'liquidated' the majority of the class whence the best civil servant is drawn.

It would be of interest to know what proportion of the failures of Soviet Russia (for all but the blindest of partisans will agree with Stalin that failures there have been)<sup>1</sup>—it would be of interest to know what proportion thereof is due to 'liquidation' of the educated *bourgeois* class. The stress that is nowadays placed upon the need for more than manual efficiency; the propaganda that urges the worker to fit himself, by education, for positions of supervision and responsibility—these are signs that the Soviet Government has realized its lack of directive ability and is trying to raise up successors to the educated *bourgeois*. In any circumstances the running of an experimental administrative machine is bound to be a difficult job; and there would seem to

<sup>1</sup> See Stalin's speech of 11th Jan. 1933 on the land situation.

be no more certain method of adding to its difficulties than by excluding the intelligentsia and the class that is experienced in the running of business from all share in its direction and handling. In the Red Army force of circumstance was too strong for the theorist and, for lack of other leadership, Tsarist officers in considerable numbers were received into the service of the Revolution. The Red Army, by all accounts, is an efficient and formidable force; and it may be that appointment of its officers for professional, and not for political reasons, has something to do with its efficiency?

Another class whose 'liquidation' cannot have been an unmixed benefit to the country at large is the much-abused class of the *koolak*<sup>1</sup>—the *koolak*, which being interpreted, is 'fist'; in other words, the grasping farmer, who impoverishes others by owning more than he should. In Soviet eyes every farmer who had done sufficiently well from his property to increase its size, employ labour, draw more than mere livelihood from

<sup>1</sup> See pages 120 and 121.

*The following is a translation of the wording on the poster:*

*Left.* To find the enemies of collective farming, look for those persons with brutal faces, enormous teeth, gross necks, and a weapon in their hands. These people may be recognized by this poster.

#### BUT SUCH 'KOOLAKS' ARE ALREADY EXTERMINATED

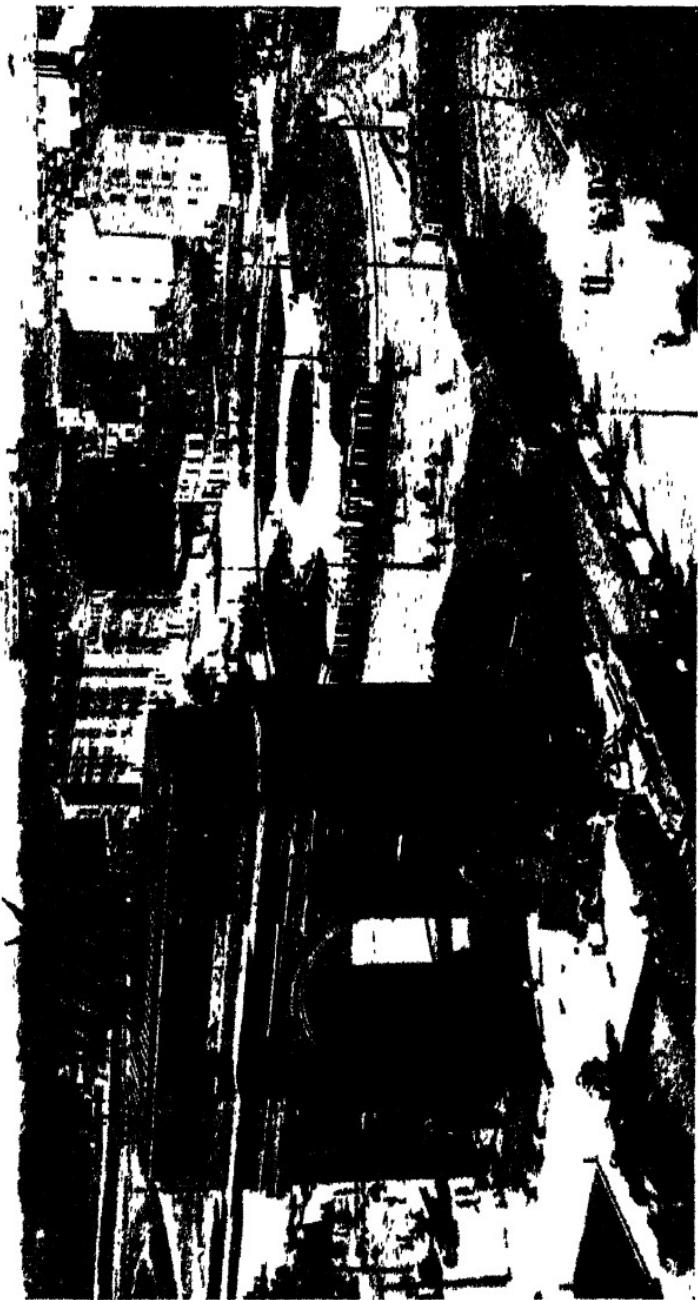
*Right.* But the present-day anti-revolutionary elements are, in the majority of cases, quiet, sweet people—so-called 'saints'. There is no need to look for them far away from the collective farms; they are in the collective farms, working as accountants, cashiers, secretaries, etc. They do not cry, with the *koolaks*: 'Do away with the collective farms!' They are for the collective farms; but they introduce into the farms such sabotage and destructive activities that the collective farms cannot benefit from them.

(Signed) STALIN.



In background post-revolutionary tenements, in foreground triumphal arch erected in memory of 1812

LINTGRAD: NEW AND OLD



his acres and cattle—in Soviet eyes such a man was a *koolak* and a sinner, whose deserved fate it was to be stripped of his good property and sent off with his family to starve or begin life again in some northern swamp or forest. What the Soviet theorist does not seem to have recognized is that *koolak* prosperity, in some instances at least, must have been due not to avarice but to sheer good farming. Taken as a class, the successful peasants who joined field to field, owned several cattle or employed a hired man must have been better at their job than the unsuccessful peasants who could only just keep themselves going. Ruthlessly and of deliberate purpose the Soviet Union has deprived itself of the services of those who got the best from the land. Stalin, in his speech on the land situation, laid the blame for failures in collective farms on their Communist leaders and administrators; but it may be that leaders and administrators are sometimes handicapped by the fact that their workers are of the less intelligent type—the type of peasant who, when he possessed it, could not run his own property successfully.

• • • • •

Of the departure from Communist principles entailed by forced investment in Government securities I have already spoken; another such departure is the system of piece-work and payment by results—that bugbear of British trade unionism. Klaus Mehnert<sup>1</sup> reports a young Communist's justification of the change. 'As regards the commune about which you were talking just now, that's a great and beautiful idea; one day we'll certainly realize it. But everything at the right

<sup>1</sup> *Youth in Soviet Russia.*

time. At the moment it's a matter of fulfilling the Five-Year Plan, of opening up our mineral wealth, of heightening production—in one word, of increasing output. In such an epoch the commune is a Utopia, the sum total of *petit bourgeois*, left-deviation, Trotskyist levelling mania. You should have been there when we reintroduced and graded the piece-work rates in our factory a year ago! Who do you suppose were against piece-work rates and for levelling? The unqualified "black" workers, who had come from their village to the town a few weeks or a month before, thinking that here one could live wonderfully and in joy without work and without qualification, who have no notion of the machines and how to operate them. And on the other hand the best people were running away from us because we didn't pay them appropriate wages. All that's different now. The unskilled worker goes at the work with a crash, and tries to increase his qualifications as quickly as possible, in order to climb a few rungs higher up the ladder of the piece-rates; the qualified man, on the other hand, has no more cause to go on the tramp, because he's properly paid and preferentially treated.'

*Preferentially treated: tries to increase his qualifications . . . in order to climb a few rungs higher up the ladder of the piece-rates*—no wonder purists of the Trotsky school were troubled! I remember a Welsh miner who, during the last coal strike, gave me his views on economics: 'Competition,' he told me, 'we've got to get rid of it! Competition—setting one man against another.' . . . The views expressed by Klaus Mehnert's young Communist would hardly have appealed to that socialistic miner; they might possibly have found more favour in the eyes of the miner's employer.

And again—in reply to a question put to the young Communist, as to whether he were not afraid of the differentiation resulting from sharp emphasis on the principle of output?

‘After all, we’re not a welfare association, not a Salvation Army. Yes, we acknowledge the principle of output, we demand that he who produces more and consequently serves the entire community more, shall also share more in the total produce. Yes, we are throwing in the personal stimulus, and we hold that to give all the people the same has nothing to do with “equality”. Our equality consists in this, that we have destroyed class and that each is judged according to his personal output, not according to inherited rank or banking account. That is at the moment the sole equality we want. . . .’ The point is still pressed that this differentiation and the egoism it inspires cannot make for the perfect Communist State, in which each shall work according to his abilities and receive according to his needs; whereupon the young enthusiast bursts out:

‘Don’t you understand, then, that by unfolding all productive energies we are coming, by way of the principle of output, to such an immense increase in production that one day this state of shortage of everything, in which we are at present, will be overcome, and in its place abundance will appear? When once this abundance has been achieved, then the last phase of Communism is there; then we shall have enough of everything to give to everybody according to his needs. Then everything you counted as the Socialist form of work and life will have their full effect and things will evolve into Communism quite of their own accord.’

If the young enthusiast is right, then Communism—

the Socialistic State as the Russian dreams it—is possible only when the process of achievement is complete. For achievement itself—for making and doing—differentiation of status and reward is necessary. Socialism, in his view, is static, not dynamic. (A view which seems justified by fact.)

There are those who will tell you that differentiation as practised in the Soviet Union is not only a personal matter of work and reward, and that a new class system is arising from the ruins of the old. Admittedly there is a disfranchised class, a cleavage between citizen and outcast; and Mr. Allan Monkhouse sees a ruling class in the OGPU. There are certain class privileges; Mrs. Cole visited a hospital in Moscow which 'could give points to most English hospitals in equipment, design, and management', but which could only be made use of 'by Government officials and those high in the ranks of the Communist Party'. Mrs. Cole, one gathers, was somewhat surprised at this proof of class privilege and distinction; she adds, however, that 'no Russian with whom I talked seemed to feel the slightest resentment about this. They accepted that the life of a high Government official was of such importance that, if he fell ill, the best resources of the State must be devoted to restoring him to health'. If that attitude is general, the idea that one man is as good as another must be disappearing, and with it the chief obstacle to the rise of a privileged class.

Such a class may be already developing from the Communist Party. In the speech already cited, Stalin attributes the failures of the land policy to the fact that the party has under-estimated its responsibilities and powers. 'In the whole world', he insists, 'there

is no party with the strength and authority of our Communist Party'; while elsewhere in the speech (as I pointed out in an earlier chapter) he shows that he does not consider the Soviet Constitution sacred. . . . Duties and rights being closely connected are easily confounded; hence it is by no means impossible that the Communist Party, which to-day considers it a duty to rule, to-morrow may consider it a right—the right of a new aristocracy.

## *XX. GUIDES AND FELLOW-TRAVELLERS— BEYOND THE FRONTIER—THE END*

OF Russians, as individuals, the tourist in the Soviet Union sees little; such acquaintance as I, myself, managed to scrape was nearly always *en route*. Official propaganda may insist on the evil intentions of capitalist nations, but the stray representative of a capitalist nation can count, as elsewhere, on friendliness and help from fellow-travellers. With gratitude I remember the shock-headed young man, a lawyer bound for Leningrad, who, when he found that my purse contained nothing but foreign currency—which the station food merchant declined to accept—wanted to press on me a loan from his stock of roubles. That was not my only experience of Russian good-nature to the stranger; and, as far as the language barrier permitted, I and my fellow-travellers usually got on well together. Obviously there is quite a lot of travelling done for pleasure; several of my temporary acquaintance were making holiday journeys. One hears it said that travel is popular in the Soviet Union because—unlike garments, edibles, and so on—it is one of the commodities always available when you have money in your pocket.

As regards Russian officials, I never came in contact with any but minor dignitaries—policemen, custodians of museums, and railway officials, male and female. With policemen the conversation was always of the one-sided variety in which I was told to move on, and my

only dealings with custodians of museums was when they demanded my outer garments before allowing me to inspect their exhibits. Here and there the railway people struck me as a trifle dictatorial, but considering their trials with the railway gate-crashers, there is surely excuse for occasional brusqueness of demeanour.

Incidentally, a remark let drop by one of my guides once set me wondering as to the manner of appointment of some of these minor officials. 'Intourist', the Government travel department, has made some arrangement whereby the foreigner in charge of his guide can be shepherded direct to the platform without passing through a waiting-room or booking-office, a stage which seems obligatory on others. On one occasion the female comrade in charge of the barrier was evidently in ignorance of this privileged arrangement and forthwith disputed our passage. The female comrade was very firm about it; though I could not understand much more than her refusal, I gathered it was not too mildly put. Again, however, I thought she had excuse; the station, like most Russian stations, was crowded, other passengers pressing on us hard. In the end my guide had to give way and instead of taking the privileged entrance we went with the general stream. My guide was unnecessarily apologetic; the *tovarish* at the barrier, she explained, knew nothing about it—you could see she was an ignorant peasant woman. This description I should think was correct—she had struck me as of roughish peasant type. But what I should have liked to ask in this connection was: How does an ignorant peasant woman get a job like that, in a station of considerable importance? Are these railway (and other) appointments in part political, given as rewards for

zealous Communism, rather than efficiency? If that system prevails, it would account for many shortcomings. . . . I should have liked to go into the question but I felt it was one to be approached indirectly and with tact—and my train was already in the station.

The author of a book from which I have previously quoted, *Ten Years in Soviet Moscow*, has some remarks on the subject of guides which the tourist might read to his advantage. The Russian guide—nearly always a woman—‘has been fairly carefully drilled in how to answer questions, but neither she nor the people who have drilled her have any idea of the sort of questions you will be likely to ask. Now all of them are painfully aware that it is their duty to give you sound Marxist answers to your questions, but only a very small minority have any really fundamental understanding of Marxism, and how fundamental an understanding is necessary may be realized if you consider that the question itself may implicitly contain three or four anti-Marxian assumptions’. . . . These are facts which should be borne in mind when holding intercourse with Russians of the younger generation. If your guide is a girl—as many of them are—you must remember that she has never known your world and does not think in its terms; it follows, therefore, that if you get off plain statement of material fact, you may find yourselves talking at cross-purposes. That, of course, is not so likely to happen when your guide is of an age to remember the despised Past; however poor her opinion of it, she will know what you mean by queries based on comparisons.

But whether they are products of a narrowly Marxian

education, or old enough to think in terms of the Past, the guides are a wonderful race: kindly, well-mannered, extraordinarily patient, extraordinarily adept in their English, considering that they never leave Russia. If they humbug you sometimes—well, they have to! and for my own part, I admired the way they combined courtesy to their charges with loyalty to their Government and opinions. If I have ever seen what authority would prefer me to ignore, it was not the fault of my mentors, but because I have eyes and make use of them. The fact that they are good Communists is an advantage to the foreigner; who, as a rule, goes to Russia that he may come in contact with Communism. My guides—competent women, businesslike and friendly—are one of my grateful memories of the Soviet Union!

. . . . .

I left Leningrad at midday, crossed the border into Latvia some eight hours later, and came in early morning to Riga. At the hotel bureau in Riga, as in duty bound, I handed in my passport; and the proprietor, seeing I had come from Russia, began to question me with interest. What parts of the country had I visited? and what about food? I cannot remember exactly what I said, but I must have returned some non-committal answer, of the careful kind, for the hotel-keeper looked at me and laughed.

'That's all right,' he said. 'You can speak quite freely here.'

And all that day I kept thinking to myself: 'You can speak quite freely here!' . . .

If ever we in England 'go insect', there is one tradition I hope we shall save from the dustbin of our bourgeois

Past. The tradition of a certain generosity to malcontents. For some odd reason, some queer twist of pride, it used to give me pleasure when I walked about Moscow to think of the many and various persons—from Bernard Shaw to the Glasgow ‘Red’—who had travelled to Moscow on British passports; given a bad character to the country they lived in; and returned to that country on their British passports, to the complete indifference of British law and police. . . . Even if we have to ‘go insect’, I hope we shall keep that tradition.

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Riga, until the Revolution, was a Russian city; Latvia, whereof it is the capital, a Russian province. If Lenin and his Bolsheviks had had their way, there would be no independent state of Latvia but a province of the Soviet Union. And if Lenin and his Bolsheviks had absorbed the state of Latvia, would Riga look as Riga looks to-day—clean and well-kept, without food queues, without rags?

I asked myself the same question in Warsaw, where I found myself a few days later. Warsaw was Russian till the fall of the Russian monarchy—and, with Warsaw, the larger third of partitioned Poland; further, the Poles, like the Russians, are Slavs—the two races are kin in blood and speech. In pre-war days the Poles laboured under many disadvantages; they were a subject race, ruled for the benefit of their overlords. With the object of placing difficulties in the way of an army invading Russia, large tracts of the country were left undrained and unfurnished with roads; its industries were fostered only as useful to Russia. Russian Poland, till yesterday, was a country where backwardness was

insisted on and development hampered of set purpose. And if, as the result of war, civil war, and revolution, the people of Soviet Russia suffered and starved to a degree we in England can only guess at, so also did the people of Poland. For six years the country was a battlefield, where armies swayed to and fro; the war in Poland did not end in November 1918—there were two more years of war with the Bolshevik to follow. And during those six years it is estimated that eighty-seven per cent of the area of Poland had been fought over. As a result (leaving death and misery out of account) two million hectares of arable land lay fallow; the greater part of the system of water-supply had been destroyed, together with far more than half of the railway stations. Of dwelling-houses, the number destroyed was over one million eight hundred thousand; two thousand four hundred railway bridges had to be replaced; churches, schools, farm buildings were everywhere in ruins. That was the task of reparation with which the new Poland was faced. Not an easy task for a country which had been torn into three pieces and whose citizens for over a century had been used to three different systems of government—Austrian, Russian, and Prussian; yet in spite of its heritage of pre-war disunion and post-war wreckage, you do not see in Poland the daily hardships and discomforts of the Soviet Union. There are no food queues and you pay for your meals without ration tickets; the local transport in Warsaw is cleaner, less overcrowded—and therefore presumably more adequate to the needs of the city—than the local transport of Moscow. Then again, as far as the main lines are concerned (I have travelled on no others) there is no comparison between the two railway systems.

I have seen misery begging in Warsaw, as I have seen it begging in London—as in these bitter times one may see it almost anywhere; but I have not seen it squalid in uttermost rags, or clamouring for food from the trains. There seems to be no shortage of such necessities and comforts as clothing and paper and drugs; and, as far as my own small experience goes, the Polish policeman is not disturbed, like his colleague in Moscow, when the tourist stops to stare at public buildings. . . . New Poland and New Russia each started its existence handicapped by post-war ruin. Is the difference that now exists between them an inevitable consequence of their differing political and economic systems? Or is Russian inferiority in so many respects due not to the system but to maladministration of the system—the blunders of an inexperienced bureaucracy? . . . Myself, I have a theory which shocks all right-thinking persons, that a bad system has its advantages for the community that works or lives by it. A bad system requires good men to run it, whereas what we call a good system can be run with very little intelligence—when it is good enough, we call it fool-proof, and can turn it over to the fool! As I am not a right-thinking person, I see little advantage in that.

I suspect that some of our Western admiration for the Soviet Union arises merely from the fact that it has produced a Plan—a Plan all-embracing, economic, political, social. We, on the other hand, have no all-embracing scheme for remoulding the world; and as we make our poor, partial attempts at repair, there are moods when it seems to us that any plan is better than none. . . . There was a time when Freedom was a

word of inspiration to humanity; '*Freedom shrieked*', one remembers, '*when Kosciusko fell*'; if she shrieks nowadays every time one of her votaries is 'bumped off', her vocal cords must be feeling it! To-day the inspiration is not Freedom but the Plan; the Corporative State of the Nazi, the Fascist, the Communist—in some form or other, the Plan, the negation of freedom. Nor is the change-over unnatural or surprising; the world of to-day is more packed with humanity than ever it was, and, thanks to swift transport and means of communication, our lives are more closely knit together. We are constantly told that a people cannot live to itself any longer, that the world is an economic unit; and the larger the mass with which you have to deal, the less it can be left to its own devices; the more essential is guidance, authority, and order. The ceaseless abundance that pours from the machine—that cannot be left to mere impulse of supply and demand; it must be regulated by conference, guided internationally, held back, let loose—and sometimes destroyed, lest it choke by the vastness of its volume. And in the same way our abundant human millions can no longer be left to the guidance of their own individualities, or permitted to produce variations at will; it stands to reason that the larger the crowd, the greater the need of the discipline that makes for uniformity. Discipline, on the material plane, is regimentation; on the spiritual or intellectual, orthodoxy. Fascism, National Socialism, Communism—one and all insist on a regimented, orthodox following. *Theirs not to reason why!* . . . When I was being driven past the Valley of Balaclava, the Tennyson couplets jingling in my head, it struck me how excellently that line would serve as motto for the Planned State of to-day!

If the Planned State continues to its logical end; dominating all the forces of the community, maintaining an Inquisition and bringing up its citizens to orthodoxy by the substitution of narrow instruction for education; then the ant-heap development would seem to be inevitable. But, in days gone by, there was another internationalism, of the Catholic Church, which also disapproved of freedom of thought and also held it better that men should die if they would not come into its system. And in the end, spite of heresy-hunting, there was heresy that defied and revolted with success—to the ultimate benefit of the Catholic Church, as well as of the heretics themselves. . . . So that even if the Planned State is our doom for the present, there is hope that the Wycliffes and Luthers of the future will break a way out of its orthodoxy.

Meanwhile, to those whom the Insect State does not attract there is comfort in the thought that in every movement is the impetus of its own reaction; and of reaction against the extreme of Marxism there would seem to be evidence in Russia of the Soviet Union. Politically, in the desire to link up more amiably with the world non-Marxist; the representatives of capitalist France have been received with friendly ceremony—in honour of their visit the *Marseillaise* has been played by Russian military bands. Facts and events which must surely indicate to the Russians aware of them that all capitalist nations are not tarred with a brush of equal blackness, that there are even some among them that have qualities desirable in allies. Which may mean, before long, a partial breaking-down of that defiance

and suspicion of the outside world which, in other regions, we should look on as a symptom of nationalism. For all the vastness of her territory and wealth of her resources, Russia is finding that she cannot stand alone and fulfil her ambition of industrialization; and if she is to get what she needs from other nations—trade with them, borrow from them—she will have, to a certain extent, to conform to the common code of international manners and refrain from attempts to overthrow other people's governments. That necessity she is said to be realizing; and the realization, in itself, is reaction from Marxist theory.

In the theatre there has been reaction against the propagandist, the platform idea; the political theatre still exists, but, on the whole, the artist seems to have obtained the upper hand of the politician. So also in literature, even the literature of the nursery—where fairy-tales may henceforth be sandwiched between Marxian precepts. More than one writer has suggested of late that the Russian woman is rebelling against too businesslike and physical a conception of love; and there is even authority for believing in reaction against the 'godless' cult. Dr. Hecker, in his book on *Religion and Communism*, speaks of dissatisfaction in the younger generation with the purely materialist explanation of life and the universe.

All of which must mean, if it strengthens, a modification of the rigid ideology of Marxism, and in time, maybe, less absorption with the State-idea, the growth of new interests and a lessening of the worship of Plan. For you cannot plan art in Government departments, you cannot plan love, and you cannot plan the grace of God.

## NOTES

### (a) *Russian Characteristics*

IN connection with the permanence of Russian characteristics under Bolshevism, it may be of interest to point out that Lenin, when he decided to throw over the allies and secede from the war, was not by any means creating a precedent; on the contrary, he was conforming to the political tradition of the Tsarist era. Russia, as an ally, has frequently shown herself changeable; Frederick the Great, in the Seven Years War, owed his extrication from a very tight place—perhaps the salvation of himself and his country—to a similar *volte-face* on the part of the Russia of his day. The Tsarina Elizabeth had joined the alliance against Prussia, and her army, at Kunersdorf, had inflicted upon Frederick the heaviest defeat of his career; and though the Russian commander failed to take full advantage of his victory, Frederick's position, from that time on, was such as to make him desirous of ending the war. On the accession of a new Tsar (Peter III) in 1762, Frederick at once made overtures for peace; and so great was his need of it that he was willing to agree to the cession of East Prussia as its price. No such sacrifice, however, was demanded of him; the new Tsar's policy was pro-Prussian, anti-Austrian; he at once broke the Austrian alliance and made peace on terms favourable to Frederick.

There was a similar reversal of friendships and enmities less than forty years later, in the days of the Tsar Paul. Paul, in December 1798, concluded with Great Britain an alliance against France and gave friendly hospitality in Courland to the exiled Louis XVIII; a couple of years later, however, he had broken with Great Britain and expelled his

royal guest with urgency; at the time of his assassination (March 1801) he was even planning a Russo-French invasion of India. With his death and the accession of his son, Alexander, came another swift change of alliance. 'The young emperor shortly after wrote a letter with his own hand to the king of Britain, expressing, in the warmest terms, his desire to re-establish the amicable relations of the two empires.' (Alison, *History of Europe*.)

(b) *Treatment of the Horse*

I do not suggest that the Russian horse is worse treated under Bolshevism than he was under Tsarism; the poor brute seems always to have had a hell of a life. 'I should say that the Russians are the most merciless savages to their horses of any nation I have ever visited'—so my *Murray's Guide* of a century ago, which has plenty of later confirmation. It is even possible that the new regime may have effected improvement in this respect; a recent visitor to Russia (Irina Skariatina in *First to Go Back*) speaks of a young woman rebuking a man who was kicking his fallen horse, and the same young woman informed her that kindness to animals was now being taught in the schools. I trust she spoke truly and that the teaching is widespread. Personally I did not see much active ill-treatment of horses, though I have seen evidence of it on their poor bodies and seen them worked with sores; what remains with me as a horror, however, is the skeleton thinness of so many. . . . Maybe those in charge of them would sometimes have been more generous with fodder if they could—the beasts and their masters were perhaps common sufferers from scarcity.

(c) *Right of Withdrawal from the Soviet Union*

My surmises with regard to a hypothetical secession-movement in the Ukraine had just been dispatched to the

printer when the following appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* (28 November, 1933—Moscow):

'Revelations concerning a conspiracy on the part of the Ukraine to break away from the Soviet Union are published to-day. The Republic, which is twice as big as Great Britain, is by nature the richest part of Russia, but is at present suffering from a food shortage.

'A resolution voted by the plenary session of the Communist Central Committee, which rules the Ukraine from Kharkov, declares: "The chief danger now to be faced is a union of Ukrainian nationalism with foreign intervention." The resolution continues:

"All the discontented elements there now combine: Great Russian Chauvinists now join with Ukrainian Nationalists and—supported by all counter-revolutionaries, including Trotzki-ists—unite on a common platform—separation from the U.S.S.R."

'The Bolsheviks, it is declared, must "give a mortal blow to all attempts to break or weaken the links between the Ukraine and other Soviet Republics."

. . . The above pronouncement of the Communist Central Committee at Kharkov seems to bear out the idea that right of free withdrawal from the Soviet Union is more theoretical than real.

#### (d) *The Black Earth Belt*

'La terre noire s'étend des bords du Pruth au Caucase, sur la plus large dimension de la Russie; elle dépasse même l'Oural et le Caucase, pour se prolonger en Asie. Ce qui lui a donné son nom, c'est une couche profonde d'humus noirâtre, d'une fertilité inépuisable, qui sans engrais produit d'opulentes moissons et qu'on a pu comparer à une Beauce gigantesque de 600,000 kilomètres carrés, à un champ de blé grand comme la France entière. . . . De tout temps, elle a été le grenier de l'Europe orientale: c'est là qu'Hérodote

plaçait les *Scythes laboureurs* et c'est de là qu'Athènes tirait ses provisions de céréales.' (Rambaud, *Histoire de la Russie*, 1913.)

A cornfield the size of France and so rich that it needs no manure! Possessing that, must there not be something wrong when your people are rationed as to bread?

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